FROM THE CHAPEL TO THE GALLERY
THE AESTHETICIZATION OF ALTARPIECES IN EARLY MODERN ITALY

by

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Department of Art
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the aesthetic response to altarpieces in early modern Italy, which culminated in the reconstitution of altarpieces as gallery paintings, when, beginning in the seventeenth century, wealthy collectors began removing them from churches and displaying them in their private collections. Such a transformation not only entailed a complete rupture in the function of these paintings – from object of public veneration to private delectation – but also frequently met with resistance and censure from local authorities. It is precisely because it was a very difficult thing to do that the documents concerning the removal of altarpieces are frequently revealing about contemporary attitudes toward art among collectors as well as ecclesiastics.

In order to understand the mechanisms – both theoretical and practical – that had to be in place for such a transformation to occur, I explore the history of the altarpiece from the rise of *ius patronatus* as an economically motivated form of piety in late-medieval Italy, through the encroachment of artistic criteria such as invention and difficulty in the making and viewing of religious art in the sixteenth century, and, finally, to the post-Tridentine discourse on sacred images. Because the purpose of this study is to establish the church as a venue for

a nascent connoisseurial discourse, I also consider the development of art collecting in Italy, which was circumscribed in extent through most of the sixteenth century. Lastly, I provide a comprehensive overview of the removal of altarpieces in seventeenth-century Italy, a phenomenon that has previously received only scant attention in art historical literature.

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Table of Contents

Abstract iii

Acknowledgments v

List of Figures ix

Introduction 1

Chapter 1. The Altarpiece between Image and Art 23

I. Early History of the Altarpiece 25

II. The Expansion of Lay Patronage 29

III. Modes of Valuation in Fifteenth-Century Altarpieces 38

IV. Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura* and the Development of the *Pala* 44

V. The Litigation Surrounding Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* 60

Chapter 2. Altarpieces and Their Viewers 77

I. Leonardo and Perugino at the Annunziata 78

II. An Excursus on Early Art Collecting 91

III. The Critical Audience for Altarpieces in Dolce's *Aretino* 101

IV. Attitudes of Viewership in Churches 113

Chapter 3. The Altarpiece as *Dimostrazione*: Three Case Studies 121

I. Altarpieces and Artistic Rivalry 121

II. Diplomatic Gifts 134

III. Images of St Sebastian 149

IV. The Encroachment of Aestheticization 158

Chapter 4. The Rupture between Sacred and Secular 169

I. Tensions about Religious Art in the Years Leading to Trent 169

II. The Bifurcation of Art and Image: Gilio's *Dialogo contro gli errori de' pittori* and Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle imagine sacre e profane* 180

III. The Bifurcation of Art and Image: Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo* 195

IV. The Picture Gallery 204

V. Giulio Mancini's *Considerazioni sulla pittura*: Picture Collecting and the Demand for Art 213

Chapter 5. From the Church to the Gallery 227

I. The Late 16th Century: Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici's Acquisition of Andrea del Sarto's *Annunciation* Altarpiece 227

II. 1608: Cardinal Scipione Borghese's "Theft" of Raphael's *Entombment* Altarpiece 238

III. 1602-1608: Rejected Altarpieces 246

IV. 1620-1650: Princes, Dukes, and Cardinals 254

V. The Church's Position 276

Epilogue. The Dawn of the Museum Age 295

Conclusion 305

Table 1. Summary of Altarpieces and Other Paintings Removed from Churches 311

Appendix 1. The Theft of Parmigianino's *Madonna Enthroned* from S. Pietro at Viadana 315

Appendix 2. The Sale of Raphael's *Madonna Enthroned* from the convent of S. Antonio da Padua at Perugia 317

Appendix 3. Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici's efforts to buy Fra Bartolommeo's *St Mark* from S. Marco at Florence 330

Figures 335

Bibliography 393

List of Figures

1. View of Carlo Crivelli Room, Sainsbury Wing, London, The National Gallery,
2. View of Chancel Chapel from S. Chiara, Medieval & Renaissance Galleries, London, Victoria & Albert Museum
3. View of installation from *Devotion by Design*, with Luca Signorelli, *Circumcision of Christ*, London, The National Gallery
4. View of installation from *Roma al Tempo di Caravaggio, 1600-1630*, with Peter Paul Rubens, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Rome, Palazzo Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Venezia
5. View of video installation from *Caravaggio e caravaggeschi a Firenze*, with Gerhard Honthorst's *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Cecco del Caravaggio's *Resurrection*, and Spadarino's *Crucifixion*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
6. Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, Paris, Musée du Louvre
7. Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, London, The National Gallery
8. Anonymous, *Elevation of the Eucharist*, Woodcut from Fra Girolamo Savonarola, *Tractato del sacramento e misterii della missa* (Florence, 1493)
9. Master of St Giles, *Mass of St Giles*, London, The National Gallery
10. Meliore di Jacopo, *Redeemer with Sts Peter, Mary, John the Evangelist, and Paul*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
11. Simone Martini, *St Catherine of Alexandria Altarpiece*, Pisa, Museo Nazionale di San Matteo
12. Coppo di Marcovaldo, *Madonna del Bordone*, Siena, S. Maria dei Servi
13. Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Maestà*, Siena, Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana del Duomo
14. Francesco Pesellino and Fra Filippo Lippi, *S. Trinità Altarpiece*, London, The National Gallery
15. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Coronation of the Virgin*, Narni, Museo Eroli
16. Raphael and Giulio Romano, *Monteluce Coronation*, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana
17. Neri di Bicci, *Enthroned with Sts Ambrose, Catherine, Margaret, and Francis*, Auctioned at Sotheby's, London, 2004
18. Fra Angelico, *Annalena Altarpiece*, Florence, Museo di San Marco
19. Fra Angelico, *S. Marco Altarpiece*, Florence, Museo di San Marco
20. Andrea Mantegna, *S. Zeno Altarpiece*, Verona, S. Zeno
21. Andrea Mantegna, *St Luke Altarpiece*, Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera
22. Fra Filippo Lippi, *Maringhi Coronation*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
23. Fra Filippo Lippi, *Marsuppini Coronation*, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana
24. Francesco Napoletano?, *Angel in Green with a Vielle* / Ambrogio de Predis, *Angel in Red with a Lute*, London, The National Gallery
25. Leonardo da Vinci, *Adoration of the Magi*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
26. Pietro Perugino, *Deposition*, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia
27. Pietro Perugino, *Assumption of the Virgin*, Florence, SS. Annunziata
28. Pietro Perugino, *Vallombrosa Altarpiece*, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia
29. Andrea del Brescianino, after Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin and Child with St Anne*, destroyed c. 1945 (formerly Berlin, Gemäldegalerie)
30. Masaccio, *St Anne Metterza*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
31. Martino Rota, engraving after Titian, *St Peter Martyr*, destroyed 1867 (formerly Venice, SS. Giovanni e Paolo)
32. Giovanni Bellini, *St Vincent Ferrer Altarpiece*, Venice, SS. Giovanni e Paolo

33. Titian, *Assumption of the Virgin*, Venice, S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari
34. Michelangeo, *Entombment*, London, The National Gallery
35. Raphael, *Madonna del Baldacchino*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
36. Fra Bartolommeo, *Pala della Signoria*, Florence, Museo di San Marco
37. Albrecht Dürer, *Feast of the Rose Garlands*, Prague, Národní Galerie
38. Albrecht Dürer, self-portrait detail from the *Feast of the Rose Garlands*
39. Taddeo di Bartolo, *Assumption of the Virgin*, Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum
40. Albrecht Dürer, *Christ among the Doctors*, Madrid, Museo-Thyssen-Bornemisza
41. Raphael, *Transfiguration*, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana
42. Sebastiano del Piombo, *Raising of Lazarus*, London, The National Gallery
43. Raphael, *St Michael Slaying the Devil*, Paris, Musée du Louvre
44. Raphael, *Holy Family of St Francis*, Paris, Musée du Louvre
45. Giulio Romano, *St Margaret*, Paris, Musée du Louvre
46. Titian, *St George*, Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini
47. Sebastiano de Piombo, *Visitation*, Paris, Musée du Louvre
48. After Fra Bartolommeo, *St Sebastian*, Fiesole, S. Francesco
49. Andrea Mantegna, *St Sebastian*, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum
50. Andrea Mantegna, *St Sebastian*, Paris, Musée du Louvre
51. Fra Bartolommeo, *St Mark*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
52. Circle of Bacchiacca, *St Sebastian with Sts Vincent and Macario*, Florence, Borgo S. Lorenzo
53. Giuliano Bugiardini, *St Sebastian*, New Orleans, New Orleans Museum of Art
54. Pietro Perugino, *St Sebastian*, Paris, Musée du Louvre
55. Pietro Perugino, *Madonna Enthroned with Sts John the Baptist and Sebastian*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
56. Titian, *Resurrection* Altarpiece, Brescia, SS. Nazaro e Celso
57. Titian, *St Sebastian*, detail from the *Resurrection* Altarpiece
58. Titian, *St Mark* Altarpiece, Venice, S. Maria della Salute
59. Titian, *St Nicholas Altarpiece*, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana
60. Roman copy, *Laocoön and His Sons*, Vatican City, Musei Vaticani
61. Michelangeo, *Rebellious Slave*, Paris, Musée du Louvre
62. Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, Vatican City, Sistine Chapel
63. Agnolo Bronzino, *Christ in Limbo*, Florence, S. Croce
64. Agnolo Bronzino, *Resurrection*, Florence, SS. Annunziata
65. Andrea del Sarto, *Holy Family*, Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica
66. Raphael, *Madonna dell'Impannata*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
67. Sandro Botticelli, *Adoration of the Magi*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
68. Andrea del Sarto, *Annunciation*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
69. Domenico Fiasella, Andrea del Sarto, *Madonna with Eight Saints* (destroyed c. 1945), Sarzana, S. Caterina
70. Raphael, *Marriage of the Virgin*, Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera
71. Antonio Allegri da Correggio, *Adoration of the Shepherds* ("*La notte*"), Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister
72. Raphael, *Portrait of Julius II*, London, The National Gallery
73. Raphael, *Madonna of Loreto*, Chantilly, Musée Condé
74. Raphael, *Entombment*, Rome, Galleria Borghese

75. Andrea Mantegna, *Entombment*, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art
76. Raphael, *Lamentation*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins
77. Pietro Perugino, *Lamentation*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
78. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Madonna and Child with St Anne* ("Madonna of the Serpent"), Rome, Galleria Borghese
79. Cecco del Caravaggio, *Resurrection*, Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago
80. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Inspiration of St Matthew*, destroyed c. 1945 (formerly Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich Museum)
81. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Death of the Virgin*, Paris, Musée du Louvre
82. Peter Paul Rubens, *St Gregory the Great with Saints*, Grenoble, Musée de Beaux-Arts
83. Peter Paul Rubens, High Altar of the *Madonna della Vallicella*, Rome, Chiesa Nuova
84. Fra Bartolommeo, *Salvator Mundi*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
85. Fra Bartolommeo, *Isaiah* and *Job*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
86. Fra Bartolommeo, *Pietà*, Florence, Galleria Palatina, after restoration
87. Fra Bartolommeo, *Pietà*, Florence, Galleria Palatina, before restoration
88. Jacopo Empoli, after Andrea del Sarto, *S. Ambrogio Altarpiece*, Stoke Poges, St Giles Church
89. Andrea del Sarto, *Annunciation with St Michael*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
90. Filippino Lippi, *Adoration of the Magi*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
91. Andrea del Sarto, *Archangel Raphael with Tobias, San Leonardo, and a Donor*, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum
92. Andrea del Sarto, *Gambassi Altarpiece*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
93. Andrea del Sarto, *Disputà*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
94. Andrea del Sarto, *Annunciation*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
95. Pietro Perugino, *Pietà*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
96. Ludovico Cardi (Il Cigoli), *Vocation of St Peter*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
97. Andrea del Sarto, *Passerini Assumption*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
98. Agostino Carracci, engraving after Francesco Francia, *St Sebastian* (formerly in S. Giuseppe fuori Porta Saragozza, Bologna), London, The British Museum
99. Fra Carnevale, *Birth of the Virgin*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art
100. Fra Carnevale, *Presentation of the Virgin*, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
101. Raphael, *Madonna del Pesce*, Madrid, Museo del Prado
102. Raphael, *Visitation*, Madrid, Museo del Prado
103. Raphael, *Lo Spasimo di Sicilia*, Madrid, Museo del Prado
104. Antonio Allegri da Correggio, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
105. Jean Boulanger, after Antonio Allegri da Correggio, *Madonna di Albinea*, Albinea, S. Prospero
106. Antonio Allegri da Correggio, *Madonna Enthroned with St George*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister
107. Antonio Allegri da Correggio, *Madonna with St Sebastian*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister
108. Dosso Dossi, *Madonna Enthroned with St Sebastian and St George*, Modena, Galleria Estense
109. Dosso Dossi, *Madonna with St George and St Michael*, Modena, Galleria Estense
110. Dosso Dossi, *Four Fathers*, destroyed c. 1945 (formerly Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister)
111. Cima da Conegliano, *Deposition*, Modena, Galleria Estense
112. Tintoretto, *Madonna in Glory with Saints*, Modena, Galleria Estense
113. Annibale Carracci, *St Roch Distributing Alms*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

114. Giuseppe Camerata, engraving after Camillo Procaccini, *St Roch Giving the Sacrament to the Plague-Stricken* (destroyed c. 1945)
115. Annibale Carracci, *Assumption of the Virgin*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister
116. Annibale Carracci, *Madonna of St Matthew*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister
117. Raphael, *Madonna of Foligno*, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana
118. Parmigianino, *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine*, Bardi, S. Maria Addolorata
119. Pietro Perugino, *Vision of St Bernard*, Munich, Alte Pinakothek
120. Jacopo Tintoretto, *Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples*, Madrid, Museo del Prado
121. Raphael, *Madonna Enthroned with Saints* (The Colonna Altarpiece), Main panel, lunette Predella (left to right): St Francis of Assisi, London Dulwich Picture Gallery; *Agony in the Garden* New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; *Pietà*, Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; *Road to Calvary*, London, The National Gallery: *St Anthony of Padua*, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery
122. Carlo Dolci, *Vision of St Louis of Toulouse*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
123. Fra Bartolommeo, *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
124. Ludovico Cardi (Il Cigoli), *Deposition*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
125. Rosso Fiorentino, *Dei Altarpiece*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
126. Francesco Bassano, *Martyrdom of St Catherine*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
127. Giacinto Campana, after Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (Guercino), *Martyrdom of St Bartholomew* (damaged), Viterbo, Chiesa della Visitazione
128. Orazio Riminaldi, *Martyrdom of St Cecilia*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
129. Orazio Riminaldi, *Moses Raising the Brazen Serpent*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
130. Annibale Carracci, *Christ in Glory with Saints*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
131. Carlo Maratta, *Madonna Appearing before S. Filippo Neri*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
132. Francesco Mazzola (Parmigianino), *Madonna of the Long Neck*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
133. Giovanni Lanfranco, *Ecstasy of St Margaret*, Florence, Galleria Palatina
134. Andrea del Sarto, *Madonna of the Harpies*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Introduction

In the opening statement of his influential study on Florentine religious images, the historian Richard Trexler boldly announced: "The pagan Renaissance is no more."[1] Using Burckhardt as his foil, Trexler heralded a fundamental reorientation of historians of Renaissance art toward sociohistorical and anthropological concerns, especially as they relate to religious traditions and institutions. Since Trexler's article appeared forty years ago, our understanding of religious images has benefitted immeasurably from the collective investigation into the intellectual, cultural, and physical conditions of their production. Of all forms of religious imagery, however, the altarpiece has arguably generated the greatest scholarly output.[2] As high-quality, purpose-driven, multivalent images, altarpieces have proved especially well-suited to context-oriented research – an enterprise that also profits from the typically rich holdings of ecclesiastical and municipal archives. Scholars have endeavoured to rehistoricize altarpieces to the fullest possible extent by recreating their original arrangements and settings and by investigating the ways they were used by religious, civic, and familial groups, all the while ensuring not to project modern aesthetic ideals onto what were foremost liturgical instruments.

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[1] Trexler 1972, p. 7.

[2] Within the past several decades there have been innumerable studies devoted to specific altarpieces as well as artists' monographs dealing with altarpiece production. The following is a selection of studies that discuss Renaissance altarpieces in more general terms: Goffen 1979; Gardner von Teuffel 1982; Hager 1982; Gardner von Teuffel 1983; Burckhardt 1988; Van Os 1988/90; Gombrich 1989; Hope 1990; Humfrey and Kemp 1990; Dunkerton et al. 1991; Humfrey 1993a; Borsook and Superbi Giofreddi 1994; De Benedictis 1996; Forlani Tempesti 1996; Humfrey 1996; Gardner von Teuffel 1999; Nagel 2000; Burke 2004; Williamson 2004; Gardner von Teuffel 2005; O'Malley 2005b; Gaston 2006; Nelson 2006; Israëls 2009; *Devotion by Design* 2011; Hall 2011; Nagel 2011.

Since the 1990s, academic research has been complemented by practical interventions to recontextualize museum-owned altarpieces, which had long since been extracted from their sacred environments and, in many cases, carved up into saleable fragments. In several recently built galleries, efforts have been made to create spaces more sensitive to the original viewing conditions of the works on display. For example, the expansive series of rooms of the Sainsbury Wing at the National Gallery in London evoke the interior of a Brunellsechian church complete with *pietra serena* plinths for the larger altarpieces (fig. 1), while in the newly renovated Victoria and Albert Museum's Medieval and Renaissance galleries, the high altar chapel from S. Chiara at Florence has been transplanted in its entirety (fig. 2). Numerous exhibitions have been mounted with the express purpose of reconstructing long-disassembled altarpieces and examining their original devotional programmes.[3] A 2011

[3] To be sure museum curators have been calling for the reconstruction of altarpieces consistently since the early twenthieth century; but they were primarily focused on the altarpieces as dismembered works of great masters; see Frizzoni 1913; Borenius 1929; Bodkin 1945 In 1996, the Museo Poldi Pezzoli staged a reconstruction of Piero della Francesca's *St Augustine* polyptych although only two of the main panels were included; *Il polittico agostiniano* 1996. The eleven surviving parts of Masaccio's Pisa Polyptych were brought together at the National Gallery in London in 2001; Gordon 2003, pp. 201-23. Two side panels and two pinnacle fragments from an unidentified altarpiece attributed to Fra Angelico were reassembled at the Yale University Art Gallery in 2001; *Rediscovering Fra Angelico* 2001. Joint exhibitions in 2004-05 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti in Turin combined the galleries' panels that once formed a triptych by Fra Filippo Lippi; *Filippo Lippi* 2004. The five panels of the predella from an unknown altarpiece by Fra Angelico were reunited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2005, and again in 2008 at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth; *Reconstructing the Renaissance* 2008. The main panel, lunette, and predella panels of Raphael's *Colonna Altarpiece* were reunited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2006; *Raphael at the Metropolitan* 2006. The 2007 reconstruction of Matteo di Giovanni's *Ascanio Altarpiece* was the centerpiece of an exhibition on Sienese art at the National Gallery in London; *Renaissance Siena* 2007, no. 17-21. In 2008, the lunette and main panel of Giovanni Bellini's *Pesaro Altarpiece* were displayed together in a monographic exhibition at the Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome; *Giovanni Bellini* 2008, no. 17-18. The four known fragments of Veronese's *Petrobelli Altarpiece*, were reconstructed at the National Gallery of Canada in 2009; *Paolo Veronese* 2009. In 2012, the Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena loaned the main panel of Bartolo di Fredi's *Adoration of the Magi* to the University of Virginia Art Museum where it was exhibited on an altarlike structure with one of the predella panels from the permanent collection; *Adoration of the Magi* 2012.

exhibition at the National Gallery in London took a more polemical approach, using altarpiece panels from its permanent collections to call attention to the loss of meaning entailed in the fragmentation, dislocation, and secularization of the religious paintings on view in modern museums.[4] The centerpiece of the exhibit was a room simulating a darkened church interior, with Luca Signorelli's *Circumcision* displayed atop a mock altar and illuminated by strong directional light (fig. 3). The same year, the organizers of an exhibition at the Palazzo Venezia on early seventeenth-century art in Rome enlisted the renowned opera set designer, Pier Luigi Pizzi, to transform the gallery rooms into nave-like spaces with flanking rows of monumental faux-marble altars (fig. 4), although the effectiveness of the installation is perhaps diminished for those works on loan from neighbouring churches.[5] Such is the fashion for these simulative displays that a 2010 exhibition at the Uffizi featured a video installation "reconstructing" the Guicciardini chapel in nearby S. Felicità as it never was (fig. 5) – three altarpieces by Spadarino, Gerard Honthorst, and Cecco del Caravaggio were displayed together virtually as planned in the original commission even though Cecco's painting was rejected by the patron before it was ever installed and instead went directly into the gallery of the seventeenth-century collector, Cardinal Scipione Borghese.[6]

The importance of these efforts cannot be overstated. Social history provided a much-needed corrective to the work of earlier generations of art historians and curators who studied altarpieces principally in terms of their artistic achievement, to be considered

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[4] *Devotion by Design* 2011.

[5] *Roma al tempo di Caravaggio* 2011.

[6] *Caravaggio e caravaggeschi a Firenze* 2010.

alongside other works of art, irrespective of genre, within artists' *oeuvres* or canonical narratives. But I also believe that in our desire to redress past biases, we run the risk of creating new distortions and inhibiting new avenues of investigation. In the case of altarpieces, this predominant focus on rehistoricization has tended to obscure the fact that the conversion of altarpieces into gallery paintings is itself a historical development with its roots firmly planted in the sixteenth century.[7] This dissertation examines this phenomenon, its antecedents and its after effects.

* * *

Since the 1970s, art historians of virtually every specialization and methodological stripe have rejected the chauvinistic and exclusionary biases of an art history predicated on the "old master" canon. Because Italian Renaissance art is most closely tied to the discipline's history and traditions, however, scholars of the field have found themselves in a double bind: on the one hand, the rich historiography of Giorgio Vasari and his heirs continues to inform areas of study; while on the other, scholars understandably wish to distance themselves from discredited views. (Indeed, the vigorous debate over the usage of the embattled term "Renaissance" vis-à-vis "early modern" has only subsided within the past several years, as academics have been inclined to accept its descriptive and connotative utility in certain contexts).[8] In the illuminating Art Seminar on the state of Renaissance art history, Robert

[7] To my knowledge the only study to deal specifically with the removal of altarpieces by private collectors prior to the museum era is Ronald Lightbown's pair of essays – now four decades ole – on the seventeenth-century "spoliators" of altarpieces by Raphael and Correggio; Lightbown 1963a; Lightbown 1963b. Sylvia Ferino Pagden reiterates Lightbown's discussion of Raphael's altarpieces in a brief article that deals more broadly with aesthetic responses to Raphael's altarpieces; Ferino Pagden 1990. Otherwise, the topic is only touched upon in catalogues raisonnés or studies of collectors.

[8] The classic statement against the term "Renaissance" is Marcus 1992. Randolph Starn, however,

Williams, who is described by the seminar participants as an "outlier" in the field, calls attention to the bias of social history against aesthetic concerns in much recent scholarship. To be sure, Williams maintains that the history of Renaissance art cannot be anything but social history; but he also observes that the study of the development of art as an "important social-historical achievement" tends to be treated dismissively.[9] To put it another way, as Rebecca Zorach muses in her excellent introduction to the seminar: "One wonders where else the defense of art and its origins will find an audience."[10]

But these concerns need not be in conflict with each other. Part of the problem is that we too often overlook the subsequent provenance of altarpieces,[11] a course of inquiry no less valid than studies devoted to the circumstances of their production, but one that is frequently relegated to the history of collecting, itself a burgeoning field of study. Collecting history, by contrast, deals principally with the evolution of the collection of all manner of objects, especially as they relate to the later development of museums. With surprisingly infrequent dialogue between historians of art and collecting, questions that arise from areas of overlap

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argues that the rapid and largely unexamined dissemination of the term "early modern" is equally problematic; Starn 2002. For the prevalence of debates on the two terms, see, for example, the "Renaissance vs. Early Modern" roundtable discussions convened by Martin Elsky at the 2000 and 2001 annual meetings of the Renaissance Society of America, and, more recently, the "Rethinking Periodization" conference held in the fall of 2006 at the University of Stanford and the University of Pennsylvania. The papers of the latter were published in a special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (formerly the *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* prior to 1996). At the 2006 meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, Starn revisited the debates in the plenary lecture, "A Postmodern Renaissance?" (published the following year in *Renaissance Quarterly*), which points the way toward a productive reconciliation between these positions; Starn 2007.

[9] Williams 2008, pp. 163-64.

[10] Zorach 2008, p. 10.

[11] Cathleen Hoeniger's recent book on the "afterlife" of Raphael's paintings, which examines the ownership and care of his works over the course of the past five centuries through the lens of the history of art conservation, is an exemplary study for approaching these concerns; Hoeniger 2011.

between sociohistorical studies and the history of collecting remain less explored. For example, how do we deal with documentary evidence that attests to altarpieces being discussed as works of art by contemporary viewers? What are we to make of the fact that process of removing altarpieces from churches to place them in picture galleries began in the sixteenth century? And what can we learn from the aesthetic values that accrued to certain early modern altarpieces in their own day?

A good place to start in addressing these questions would be Jacob Burckhardt's seminal essay "Das Altarbild" (The Altar Picture).[12] Written more than one hundred years ago, it remains the only synthetic survey of Renaissance altarpieces, and as such provides a useful introduction to the subject, thanks in large measure to Peter Humfrey's 1988 English translation, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Italy*, which brought renewed attention to a text mostly overlooked outside of German-speaking art history.[13] Although "Das Altarbild" was written (along with the companion essays, "Das Porträt in der Malerei" and "Der Sammler") only in the final years of Burckhardt's life – and long after he had abandoned his ambitious plans for an accompanying study of Italian Renaissance art as announced in the introduction of his landmark *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy) – the essay nevertheless expresses a *summa* of decades spent grappling with the question of how best to approach the new discipline of art history.[14] Burckhardt intended the

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[12] Jacob Burckhardt, "Das Altarbild," in *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte von Italien* (Basel, 1898).

[13] Burckhardt 1988.

[14] A manuscript composed around 1863 represents Burckhardt's earliest effort toward a "Kunst der Renaissance." It contains four sections: the two sections on architecture and decoration instead appeared as the fourth volume of Franz Kugler's *Geschichte der Baukunst* (Stuttgart, 1867), and independently as *Geschichte der Renaissance in Italien* (Stuttgart, 1878); the other two sections on painting and sculpture, however, were never published. Judging the manuscript to be "unsatisfactory

essay as an introduction to his idea of "Kunstgeschichte nach Inhalt und Aufgaben," or "Art History according to content and tasks," an approach he hoped would be taken up by subsequent generations of art historians.[15] Seeking a middle ground between cultural history and aesthetics, Burckhardt saw major developments in art as the outcomes of individual convergences of functional demands and expressive content. Accordingly, in "Das Altarbild," he organized material not as a historical progression of artists and schools, but by genre ("Gattung"), putting the emphasis foremost on pictorial form and content. Ultimately, this project did not find favour among his immediate successors, and today Burckhardt's writings on art are discussed mostly in the context of historiography and critical theory. Yet resonances of his sensitive observations on such topics as the *sacra conversazione*, the unified *pala*, and the development of narrative subjects continue to inform even the most current writing on the subject of altarpieces.

The persistent relevance of "Das Altarbild" can be partly explained by the fact that Burckhardt did not misapply modern ideas about art to pre-modern images so much as he believed easel painting to be a direct descendant of the Renaissance altarpiece and sought to explain the mechanisms of this lineage. Throughout the essay, Burckhardt stresses that it was through the altarpiece most of all that artists channelled their creative energies, realizing key

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in principle and execution," Burckhardt abandoned the project to devote his energies to teaching. He resumed the project in 1885 – this time intended for his own scholarly interest rather than publication – reorganizing the structure according to genre, and adding new material, including sections on the altarpiece. By 1893, Burckhardt had evidently become dissatisfied with this approach as well, and, with his health waning, vastly reined in his scope to compose independent essays dealing the altarpiece, the collector, and the portrait as well as a fourth essay on Rubens. Burckhardt bequeathed the manuscripts of the essays to the public library in Basel and requested that they be published if it was financially feasible. For an overview and chronology of Burckhardt's writings, see Ghelardi 2005.

[15] Hinde 2000, ch. 9 "The Search for an Autonomous History of Art." For an analysis of Burckhardt's essay on the altarpiece in particular, see Van Os 1990.

advances in the rendering of space and light, the handling of figures, and the treatment of landscape such that by the end of the fifteenth century, the altarpiece had become, in his words, "the most progressive genre in Italian painting."[16] For this reason, he argues that it was the development of the square picture field in fifteenth-century altarpieces that decisively established the *quadro* as the dominant format for pictures, and consequently set the stage for the rise of large-scale easel painting, "an innovation that was to be of immense importance for the whole subsequent history of Western art."[17] To be sure, in drawing a direct parallel between the altarpiece and the easel painting, Burckhardt bypasses complex developments that unfolded over the course of centuries. But his ideas nevertheless suggest an alternative way that we might look at altarpieces beyond patronage and social history, and one that will be given serious consideration in the pages that follow.

Burckhardt's remarks on the ontological and morphological affinities between altarpieces and easel paintings intersect with more recent scholarship that locates the origins of modern ideas of art within the debates on religious images that ran the course of the sixteenth century. The principal text for this line of argument is Hans Belting's 1990 *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (translated in 1994 as *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*), a magisterial study of the adaptation and transformation of Byzantine icons from late antiquity to the Renaissance.[18] Although Belting focuses principally on medieval cult images – he only arrives at the

[16] Burckhardt 1988, p. 81.

[17] Burckhardt 1988, p. 55.

[18] Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich, 1990); English translation as Belting 1994.

sixteenth century in the final chapter – the book has accrued much critical attention from historians of Renaissance art due to his characterization of the years around 1500 as a critical turning point when the "era of images" decisively gave way to the "era of art." Belting's dichotomy clearly and intentionally evokes Walter Benjamin's celebrated essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), which argues that lithographic and photographic reproduction eroded the aura of authenticity of museum works, thereby emancipating them from an anachronistic and fetishistic notion of "exhibition value," itself directly inherited from the ritualistic "cult value" of religious images.[19] But in place of Benjamin's largely philosophical ruminations about the relation between art and politics in the early twentieth century, Belting offers a sharply historicized pre-history of the development of the work of art.

Belting explains that although criticisms against the abuses of holy images were age-old, with the onset of the Reformation, the Church found itself unable to contain the renewed controversy surrounding religious art, which now formed a volatile and highly visible component of a wholesale attack against the papacy. Belting persuasively demonstrates that the question of what kinds of images, if any, were suitable for liturgy and devotion was inseparable from the question of what was appropriate for secular contexts, a distinction that recurs on both sides of the Alps. At the extreme, the rejection of religious images led to the iconoclastic outbreaks in the north – effectively resolving the conflict by eliminating its source – and gave impetus to the development of secular genres of art. By contrast, in Italy, where the validity of religious images remained unquestioned throughout the Reformation

[19] Benjamin 1968, pp. 226-27.

crisis, art and religion coexisted in a fraught dialogue. At issue was the increasing importance placed on painters' skill and invention, which were targeted by post-Tridentine injunctions against artistic licence. This "crisis of the image," Belting argues, ultimately resulted in a new hermeneutics of picture-making that was now mediated by aesthetic rules.[20]

Belting's thesis informs recent scholarship on early-sixteenth-century religious painting that considers the ways artists responded to the challenge of how to represent the sacred in the face of the new aesthetic values (a dilemma more commonly associated with the aftermath of the Council of Trent). In *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, Alexander Nagel examines the artist's *oeuvre* as a life-long project to sanctify modern pictorial language by referring back to archaic, and thus, purer prototypes.[21] Nagel returns to this theme more broadly in *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*, recasting the first half of the sixteenth century as a prolonged period of artistic experimentation when Italy's most thoughtful artists investigated, challenged, and reinvented the category of religious art in response to prevailing image controversies.[22] Klaus Krüger's *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren* similarly characterizes this period as one of "conflict," when the mediating role between the holy image and its represented subject was absorbed into the aesthetic experience of the artist's representation, which now had value in its own right.[23] Indeed, it is a testament to the extent to which *Bild und Kult* has permeated scholarship on Italian Renaissance art that Marcia Hall's ambitious survey of religious painting in Italy from Fra Angelico to Caravaggio –

[20] Belting 1994, pp. 458-59.

[21] Nagel 2000.

[22] Nagel 2011.

[23] Krüger 2001, p. 133ff.

published with the emphatically Beltian title *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art* – makes no mention of Belting in the text itself.[24]

There has also been considerable resistance to the sharp line Belting draws between the "era of images" and the "era of art." Following the appearance of *Bild und Kult*, David Freedberg presented his response to it at a 1991 Dumbarton Oaks conference on "The Holy Image" chaired by Belting, which forms the touchstone of the principal argument against it: that is, the era of the image continues to this day.[25] Freedberg had already posed this argument in his similarly monolithic book, *The Power of Images*, published in 1989, in which he set out to challenge "art history's excessive emphasis on high art."[26] By exploring the affective responses engendered by all types of pictures – from popular ephemera to high art – Freedberg sought to overturn the privileged position accorded to the canonical subjects of art history and bring much needed attention to the larger purview of visual culture, an approach that has proved to be well-suited to the study of early-modern religious art in particular.[27] To be sure, in the introduction of *Bild und Kult*, Belting himself agrees with Freedberg and admits that there is an "element of exaggeration" in his narrative, and that many, if not most, religious images continued to function in the sixteenth century much as they had before.[28] Thus, much of the legacy of *Bild und Kult* has been to suggest ways that barriers between

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[24] Hall 2011.

[25] Freedberg 1995.

[26] Freedberg 1989, p. xix.

[27] The past decade has seen a sharp rise in the number of studies dedicated to the use of cult images in ritual and lay devotion. See, for example, the collected essays in Thunø and Wolf 2004; Cornelison and Montgomery 2005; Cole and Zorach 2009.

[28] Belting 1994, p. 16. .

medieval and early modern art history might be challenged, in large part due to Belting's many insights about the ways cult images were used during the Middle Ages.[29]

As Jeffrey Hamburger points out, even as scholars complicate and qualify the simplicity of Belting's thesis, they nevertheless "testify to the attraction and persuasiveness of the questions that structure his inquiry."[30] However, many fewer scholars have engaged Belting's arguments about the origins of the work of art.[31] Today, there is little doubt that the "era of art" could hardly be characterized as a *fait accompli* by 1500; but evidence of its further development in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is less explored.[32] Among the studies to pick up where Belting left off, Victor Stoichita's *L'Instauration du tableau* aims to open discussion on the status of painting as a "modern" figurative object during the early modern era.[33] Stoichita considers mostly Northern paintings produced between the iconoclastic revolt at Wittenberg in 1522 and the appearance of Cornelius Norbertus Gijsbrechts's *trompe l'oeil* painting of the back of a canvas in c. 1675, these events marking

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[29] Hambuger 2011, pp. 43-44.

[30] Hamburger 2011, p. 44.

[31] As Victor Stoichita notes, there has been no lexicographical study of key terms associated with the work of art; Stoichita 1997, pp. xiii-xiv.

[32] Belting himself is little interested in the subject. As expressed in his other writings, Belting betrays his opinion of the "era of art" to be overwhelmingly negative, as a period when images were drained of their power and authenticity by stilted artistic conventions, which were, in turn, only broken down with the onset of modernism at the end of the nineteenth century, at which point his interest in images – as unmediated, authentic, and active – resumes. See, for example, Belting 1987; Belting 2001; Belting 2003.

[33] Victor Stoichita, *L'Instauration du tableau: metapeinture a l'aube des temps modernes* (Geneva, 1993); trans. as Stoichita 1997.

the death of the old image and the maturation of the new image, respectively.[34] Stoichita calls attention to the pervasive generic instability provoked by the Reformation critique of religious images, as painters grappled with the fundamental question of what painting should depict and how it should be depicted. Eschewing contemporary theory in favour of painting itself, Stoichita draws his arguments through his nuanced readings of "meta-paintings," those deliberately constructed images that appear to self-reflexively comment in their unusual content or composition on the status of religious images, the development of new genres of art, and the emergence of practices of connoisseurship and collecting.

In a similar vein, the purpose of this study is to consider evidence for the development of modern ideas of art by focusing on the works themselves in order to chart those threshold moments when altarpieces were reconstituted as works of art by their viewers. There are two interrelated questions at the root of this study: why did some altarpieces elicit an aesthetic response, and why did some viewers respond to them as works of art? Three decades after the appearance of his ground-breaking article on religious images, Richard Trexler posed an analogous line of inquiry in his call for art historians to unearth the "lexicon" of the pictorial language of religious art that provoked the veneration of devotees. Only then, he claimed, "can that old art-historical question be answered of whether the art of the so-called Renaissance was in fact less … miraculous than other styles of representation."[35] In other words, despite his renunciation of the "pagan Renaissance," Trexler nevertheless recognized that sacred images could be better understood by studying them in relation to profane ones, a

[34] Stoichita 1997, p. xiv.

[35] Trexler 2004, p. 19.

challenging task when the appreciable visual differences between them are often difficult to discern.

I will consider this problem from the opposing point of view, so to speak, for what religious images might tell us about emerging conceptions of art during a period in which textual sources can be oblique, repetitious, and otherwise unforthcoming.[36] But, *pace* Trexler, it is not simply the pictorial language of the altarpiece *cum* work of art that interests me here, but also the mechanisms – both theoretical and practical – external to the image that had to be in place before any religious image could be transformed into an object of aesthetic appraisal. Altarpieces are ideally suited to this inquiry precisely because – unlike privately owned devotional paintings, which were easily assimilated into the very first collections and galleries – they posed considerable resistance to processes of aestheticization: their powerful institutional bonds shaped viewers' experiences; their subject matter could cause problems of decorum for even the most disinterested observer; and their strong pictorial conventions did not always conform with the values of contemporary ideas about art. It is precisely this resistance that makes their transformation into gallery paintings meaningful, and potentially sheds light on contemporary attitudes toward art.

As the sixteenth century drew to a close, an expanding network of connoisseurs and increasingly powerful collectors could not help but turn a covetous eye to the virtuoso works of past and present masters installed in churches. In the most extreme cases, viewing an altarpiece as a work of art meant removing it from the chapel and installing it in the gallery. Only a relatively small number of altarpieces – mostly acknowledged masterpieces of central

[36] For example, David Cast notes a "certain hesitation" when Vasari discusses his personal response to art in favour of emphasizing properties of art that were reasoned and public. Cast 2009, preface.

Italian painting from the first half of sixteenth century, or in rare instances, rejected commissions by highly esteemed artists – trickled into private collections before the late seventeenth century; and it was not until the nineteenth century that altarpieces flooded the art market in the wake of the suppressions of the religious orders and the Napoleonic invasions. But this should not deter us from dwelling on the significance of those that did. For the reconstitution of any altarpiece as a gallery painting entailed nothing less than a complete rupture of genre and only those works that were in accordance with prevailing views on art could make the transition.

My initial focus when I began my research was on the physical movement of altarpieces into galleries, a practice which began in earnest at the outset of the seventeenth century. This remains a critical part of this project, and forms the last chapter of this dissertation. But as my research progressed, my thinking on the matter began to shift. Noting that many of the earliest altarpieces to be removed to galleries also boasted histories of aesthetic responses that dated back to their installation, I also began to consider the implications of their reception in the sixteenth century.

Almost any art historian would maintain that religious images can be productively studied according to their functional purpose and their presumed audience of patrons, clerics, and laity. Generally speaking, however, our knowledge of the ways altarpieces functioned once they were installed is considerably murkier than we are inclined to acknowledge.[37] Much research investigates the altarpiece at the point of its production, considering such myriad determining factors as pictorial and iconographic sources, theology, liturgy, popular

[37] Cf. Burke 2004, pp. 120ff.

devotional practices, the interests and beliefs of its patron and religious institution, and the prevailing social and political landscape. Certainly scholarship of the past several decades has contributed to a much fuller understanding about the use of religious images; but responses to individual images were widely varied. While we often have indications of how specific altarpieces were intended to function in the accompanying contracts (where they survive), much of what we do know about the actual use of religious art in public ritual and devotion concerns mostly cult images (a discrepancy that requires greater scrutiny from the field in the future).

Research on sixteenth-century altarpieces, by contrast, continues to cluster around "marquee" names, which benefit from long historiographic traditions, established attributions, firm chronologies, and fertile documentary sources. We mine the rich repository of Vasari and his heirs for information about artists, their works, and their patrons, always cautious of their authors' biases and possible lapses in accuracy. As a result, we are reasonably confident in what early modern art writers say about how circles of intellectuals and other elites responded to canonical paintings, but much warier when they discuss ordinary viewers.[38] This is not in itself problematic. We expect primary sources from the learned or wealthy to reflect their interests and to survive at a greater rate than ephemera from the broader population. As a result, we tend to discount the representativeness of the response of art writers – especially when it comes to public, religious art – as necessarily

[38] This point forms the basis of Pamela Jones's ground-breaking study of viewer responses to seventeenth-century altarpieces. She notes that the social history of sixteenth-and seventeenth-century religious art has typically focused too narrowly on "fine art," interpreted in the context of "official religion" and elite viewers. She argues that new approaches and new types of sources, which draw from the study of popular culture, are necessary for a more holistic understanding of the reception of religious art across all levels of society; Jones 2008.

skewed toward aesthetic concerns. Yet, as I hope to demonstrate in the following pages, we find indications of altarpieces being viewed as works of art in the documentary evidence as well, including contracts, correspondence, lawsuits, inventories, church records, chronicles, and even the altarpieces themselves.

I wish to reiterate that this dissertation deals primarily with "exceptional" altarpieces that are by no means assumed to be typical of the genre. For this reason, I have had to cast my net wide. Earlier attempts to structure my research around a particular artist, collector, or region were abandoned because each approach would have meant that too many key examples would be left out. I have opted instead to proceed through a series of case studies, most of which deal with works by well-known artists made in major Italian centres. The material is organized chronologically, but each chapter will consider a different category of evidence and address a different aspect of the aestheticization of altarpieces. To this end, I have also endeavoured to follow the development of the usage of the terms "painter" and "artist," only deploying the latter when the evidence suggests that the painting in question was considered in some measure to be a work of art. Likewise, I have tried to minimize references to the "Renaissance" in favour of chronological terminology in deference to the valid criticisms against its relevance for the broader concerns of social history. I have not gone so far as to banish its usage from this dissertation, because it can still convey a specific set of cultural (and pictorial) values when it is understood to apply to certain elite groups in central and Northern Italy. Finally, it should be noted that the term "aesthetics" (and its variants) is used throughout in a broad sense referring to the appreciation of beauty in art, while also acknowledging that, in a strict sense, its anachronism is compatible with the goals

of this study.[39]

In the first chapter, I begin with a brief history of the early diffusion of altarpieces in late-medieval Italy and the developments in form and usage in the fifteenth century that laid the groundwork for the crisis between image and art in the sixteenth century. Contracts for altarpieces reveal that, from an early date, private and corporate patrons attached an ancillary role to altarpieces as public displays of status and taste. As Michael Baxandall has already shown in his classic study, *Painting and Experience in 15th-Century Italy*, artists' contracts reveal that over the course of the fifteenth century, patrons attached less importance to the use of precious materials and more to painters' *ingegno* and skill.[40] Given the economies of lay patronage, however, the disjunction between these modes of valuation was especially and uniquely problematic for altarpieces. I will explore this conflict through the contract and ensuing litigation concerning payment for Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks* for the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception in Milan.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I will consider textual evidence for the aestheticization of altarpieces during the first half of the sixteenth century as modern ideas of artistic originality and genius emerged in the contemporary discourse on painting. Chapter 2 focuses on viewer attitudes toward altarpieces. The principal case study revolves around the accounts of the reception of two works by Leonardo and Perugino at the SS. Annunziata in Florence. While Leonardo's celebrated drawing of the *Virgin and Child with St Anne* was put on display as a

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[39] In his study of the aesthetic response to art during the Renaissance, David Cast notes that while the term "aesthetic" did not yet exist, "delight," as it was used in contemporary writing on art, expresses comparable qualities of private, distinterested delectation; Cast 2009.

[40] Baxandall 1988, ch. 1, "Conditions of Trade."

dimostrazione of his skill and ingenuity, Perugino's more traditional *Assumption* for the high altar was rebuked for its re-used (and outmoded) composition. Because the purpose of this chapter is ultimately to establish the church as a venue for a nascent aesthetic discourse, I turn briefly to art collecting in the private sphere. I wish to stress that, despite the emergence of secular genres of painting for private consumption, the extent of private collecting was circumscribed. Rather, most artistically significant paintings continued to be made for religious institutions. Texts by Savonarola, Vasari, and Ludovico Dolce, among others, provide early evidence for the connoisseurial response to church art.

Turning to the works themselves, the third chapter proceeds through a series of case studies that attest to the extra-devotional roles that artists and patrons intended their altarpieces to perform: as competitive demonstration pieces, as covetable diplomatic gifts, and as vehicles for the depiction of the male nude, the *ne plus ultra* of artistic accomplishment in early-sixteenth-century Italy. Although executed and installed as altarpieces, these paintings were conceived with explicitly artistic goals. This was not necessarily dissonant with their liturgical function in pre-Tridentine Italy; however, the last category proved to be more problematic when it came to the distinction between art and image. The chapter concludes with a discussion of two paintings of St Sebastian – one by Fra Bartolommeo, the other by Titian – both of which, it will be argued, transgressed their status as devotional objects, and both of which present some of the earliest evidence of the will of connoisseurs to remove altarpieces from their settings.

In the fourth chapter, I consider art writing during the latter half of the sixteenth century, a period in which, I will argue, the necessary conditions for the physical displacement of altarpieces were established. The Catholic reform of religious images, as

ratified in the Council of Trent, were meant both to uphold the validity of religious art and to curtail its aestheticization. But while the former was readily accomplished by recourse to traditional defences of images, the latter presented an unfamiliar problem. Although the actual extent to which the Tridentine edicts were implemented in the production of new altarpieces remains a matter of debate, the issues raised by ecclesiastical writers such as Giovanni Andrea Gilio, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, and Raffaello Borghini concerning license and decorum had implications for all types of paintings. It is the unintended legacy of Trent to have given impetus to the proliferation of dedicated galleries for the collecting and display of art, which would be comparatively free from censorious injunctions, and the concomitant emergence of a new discourse oriented toward the needs of connoisseurs.

In the fifth chapter, I turn to the physical displacement of altarpieces in the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as documented in inventories of art collections and in related correspondence and church records. The central case study for this chapter will be Scipione Borghese's theft of Raphael's *Entombment* altarpiece from S. Francesco in Perugia, which was certainly the most notorious contemporary example of an altarpiece being removed to the gallery. In this instance, both the altarpiece and the collector were exceptional. As a limit case, the episode helps to shed light on the types of images and the practical circumstances that brought about the removal of altarpieces to galleries. In view of these conditions, I will provide an overview of the expansion of this practice among leading collectors in Italy. I have endeavoured to include as many examples of the practice as possible; however, it should be noted that this survey was not conducted according to a systematic method due to the massive scope such an undertaking. There are doubtless many more examples that remain to be discovered. Lastly, I will explore documentation regarding

contemporary attitudes among collectors and ecclesiastics, which suggests that sophisticated distinctions between image and art along the lines proposed by Benjamin and Belting were made among both groups.

Aside from a brief epilogue, I will not delve into the wholesale removal of altarpieces inaugurated with the foundation of the Musée du Louvre and the Napoleonic invasions of Italy during the 1790s, an event of monumental significance, but one that introduces a whole new problematic: the birth of the modern secular museum, a topic that is the subject of an already formidable discourse, which is beyond the scope of this study.[41] Rather, it is the purpose of this dissertation to investigate the progressive aestheticization of altarpieces, a task that was mostly accomplished by that time, and to bring new attention to an essential component of the histories of both altarpieces and art collecting.

[41] Starn 2005 provides an excellent and welcome overview of the "tidal wave" of museum studies that has emerged in recent decades.

Chapter 1. The Altarpiece between Image and Art

While in the midst of working on his first major commission – an altarpiece for the church of S. Donato a Scopeto – Leonardo da Vinci abruptly left Florence for Milan in search of greater fortunes at the court of Lodovico Sforza. Leonardo, it seems, sought the wealth and prestige that came with a permanent court appointment, and had sent a letter to the Duke enumerating the various services he could offer the warrior-ruler.[1] Leonardo tactically emphasized his skills as a military engineer, only mentioning his abilities as a painter and draughtsman in passing near the end of the letter. Thus, his earliest Milanese commission came not from Sforza, but rather from the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception. In 1483, Leonardo began work on the *Virgin of the Rocks*, the central panel of a large, multi-media polyptych to be installed in their newly founded chapel in S. Francesco della Grande in Milan. The painting survives in two variants in the Louvre (fig. 6) and The National Gallery in London (fig. 7), both of which depict the Virgin and Christ Child seated in front of a rocky grotto, flanked by the Infant John the Baptist and a mysterious angel.[2]

Art historians have long recognized the *Virgin of the Rocks* as an exemplary work, representative of the turn away from the rule-based, perspectival compositions of the fifteenth century toward a more organic representation of space and volume achieved through its naturalistic setting, subtle rendering of colour and light, and intimate grouping of figures. More than that, Leonardo's "scientific" observations of the natural world, his trademark use

[1] Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 251-53.

[2] The paintings were shown together for the first time during an exhibition held in 2011-12 at the National Gallery in London. For a general discussion of the two versions of the *Virgin of the Rocks* and overview of the literature, see *Leonardo da Vinci* 2011, nos. 31-32.

of *sfumato* to create almost imperceptible gradations of light and shade, and his evocations of the subtle emotional interactions between of his figures are also held to epitomize the artist's self-professed status as an learned creator. These are not retrospective assessments; the *Virgin of the Rocks* posed a real challenge to the expectations of the Confraternity, as documented in the legal wrangling over the terms of the contract. More than a quarter of a century after the project began, Leonardo, along with Giovanni and Ambrogio de Predis (who were responsible for painting the side panels), remained embroiled in an ongoing legal dispute with the patrons regarding the final payment for the project. Such contractual disagreements were not uncommon; however, they typically involved clients who were dissatisfied with the results or painters whose expenses had exceeded projected costs. What was remarkable, in this case, was that the painters' claims for increased compensation rested principally on Leonardo's growing renown, while the patrons insisted on adhering to the traditional, cost-based valuations for altarpieces that had been agreed upon in the terms of the original contract.

To be sure, the religious function of the *Virgin of the Rocks* was never in dispute; rather, it was the role of the painter, and the concomitant system of valuation, that was at stake. As I hope to show in this chapter, the conflict between Leonardo and his clients had its roots in the very origins of the painted altarpiece in the twelfth century. This is not to say that these early altarpieces looked similar to a painting like the *Virgin of the Rocks*, but rather that certain essential characteristics – their fundamental openness with regard to form and content, their practical engagement with their political, social, and economic contexts, and their reliance on sensory appeal to move the devotee – permitted conflicting values to be attached to altarpieces by their owners, makers, and viewers, and laid the groundwork for the debates

on religious images that followed in the sixteenth century. It will be necessary first to chart how these characteristics developed during the intervening centuries, before returning to consider the case of the *Virgin of the Rocks* as an altarpiece caught between the "era of images" and the "era of art."

I. Early History of the Altarpiece

Unlike other accoutrements of the altar table, the altarpiece did not have a specific function in liturgical ceremonies, nor was it ever officially prescribed by the church. The early origins of the altarpiece are unclear, but they seem to have begun to proliferate sometime during the twelfth century.[3] Their diffusion is usually associated with the new prominence of Mass and the sacrament of the Eucharist. As Miri Rubin explains, beginning in the eleventh century, the papacy sought to centralize and unify liturgical practices throughout Christendom as a means of reasserting its authority.[4] One of the key strategies was to confirm the necessity of the Church and its agents in the spiritual lives of the laity, and the principal way this was accomplished was through the doctrine of Purgatory and the concomitant emphasis on Mass as a means to salvation.[5] This entailed the institution of rigidly defined rituals that would dramatize the role of sacerdotal mediation and offer the faithful a direct experience with God through the Real Presence of Christ.[6] In order to stress the crucial moment at which the host

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[3] The classic study on the early history of the altarpiece remains Hager 1962. See also Bishop 1962, pp. 20-30; Burckhardt 1988, pp. 19-40; Gardner 1994.

[4] Rubin 1991, pp. 12ff.

[5] On the role of Mass in late medieval piety, see Jungmann 1950, ch. 11, "The Gothic Period;" Bossy 1983.

[6] Rubin 1991, pp. 49ff.

became the blood and body of Christ, the priest elevated the chalice at the moment of first consecration. It is generally held that images were introduced atop the altar in order to give visual emphasis to the sacrament as the priest stood in front of the altar with his back to the laity, as shown in a woodcut from Savonarola's *Tractato del sacramento e misterii della missa* (Florence, 1493; fig. 8).[7] Not only did the priest visually obstruct the altar frontal or antependium, which was the principal adornment of the altar, but he also ran the risk of indecorously impinging upon its physical space.[8] The immediate solution seems to have been to re-purpose the antependium with very little alteration to its original form, a practice illustrated in the *Mass of St Giles*, which depicts the high altar of St Denis in Paris adorned with the gilded and bejeweled antependium that had been presented to the church in the ninth century by Charles the Bald (fig. 9).[9]

When the doctrine of Transubstantiation was finally affirmed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, decisive impetus was given to the development of the altarpiece.[10] The antependium cum altarpiece gave way to larger and more complex structures that would better suit its role as an object of devotional attention in liturgical rituals. Byzantine icons, which were brought back to Italy in large numbers following the fall of Constantinople in 1204, provided new models for form and content. Icons of the Madonna and Child had obvious Eucharistic connotations that made them apt subjects for altarpieces, and their

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[7] Van Os 1988/90, vol. 1, p. 13ff. For an overview of the literature and challenge to the widespread acceptance of this view, see Williamson 2004.

[8] Van der Ploeg 2002, pp. 107-08.

[9] Dunkerton et al. 1991, p. 27. For the use of antependia as altarpieces, see also Van Os 1988/90, vol. 1, pp. 12-13; Van der Ploeg 2002, pp. 108-111.

[10] Van Os 1988/1990, vol. 1, pp. 13-14.

brilliant colouring and stylized execution were widely adopted throughout the Italian peninsula.[11] Further adaptations were oriented towards customizing the altarpiece to its particular dedication (the church itself in the case of high altarpieces, or the specific titulus in the case of chapel altarpieces), usually through the inclusion of accompanying saints.[12] With early dossals, the central icon was expanded laterally as in a panel of the *Redeemer with Sts Peter, Mary, John the Evangelist, and Paul* by the Florentine painter Meliore di Jacopo, which is signed and dated 1271 (fig. 10). These modest panels soon gave way to more elaborate, multi-tiered structures, allowing for a further expansion of the iconographic repertory, as exemplified in Simone Martini's polyptych for the high altar of S. Caterina at Pisa (fig. 11).[13] Additional images typically appeared in lunettes, pinnacles, the predella, and even within dividing members, and were arranged in associative patterns ordered around a central panel of the Madonna and Child, with Christological themes along the central axis, flanking saints to the sides (usually name saints, civic protectors, and plague saints), Old Testament figures, prophets, or angels in the upper registers, and related narrative scenes beneath, the whole of which was set within an elaborate Gothic enframement. The result was a visually dazzling yet highly legible arrangement of sacred personages and biblical stories.[14]

These increasingly complex altarpieces were effectively ratified with the Synod of Trier in 1310, which dictated that the titulus of an altar must be identified by means of "an

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[11] Belting 1994, ch. 17, "Norm and Freedom: Italian Icons in the Age of the Tuscan Cities."

[12] Gardner von Teuffel 1999, p. 192.

[13] On the transformation of the dossal, see especially White 1979, ch. V, "The Stoclet and Perugia Madonnas, the Siena Polyptychs and the Development of the Large-Scale Altarpiece."

[14] On the pictorial programmes of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century polyptychs, see Cannon 1982; and especially Merzenich 1996, pp. 120-21.

image, either a sculpture, some writing, or a picture."[15] This stipulation was virtually the sole "rule" concerning the content of altarpieces until the onset of the Counter Reformation, effectively leaving the matter of form and iconography almost completely open-ended. Thus, even at this early stage, one of the most salient qualities of the altarpiece was already set in motion: its mutability. The absence of firm guidelines governing the appearance of altarpieces meant that they were fundamentally adaptable and thus responsive to changes in the religious climate, and – as so many patronage studies of recent decades have amply demonstrated – social, economic, and political vicissitudes. Moreover, as essentially decorative accessories distinct from the altar itself, altarpieces did not require consecration, although installation was often accompanied by a ceremony or procession to mark the occasion;[16] as such, they could be updated, removed, or replaced according to prevailing tastes. Although much recent scholarship puts a clear emphasis on such external factors as the driving force in the evolution of altarpiece design, oftentimes it was artistic experimentation that lay at the root of these developments, in which successful adaptations were either ratified or rejected in terms of their adoption in subsequent altarpieces.[17] But

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[15] Quoted and translated in Burke 2004, pp. 123-24: "Ut imagines Ecclesiae fiunt supra altare. Praecipaimus, ut in unaquaque Ecclesia ante vel post vel super Altare sit imago, vel sculptura, vel scriptura, vel pictura espresse designans, et cuilibet intuenti manifestans, in cuius sancti meritum et honorem sit ipsum Altare constructum."

[16] Indeed, Albrecht Dürer's injunction to his patron Jacob Heller not to allow holy water to be thrown over the altarpiece of the *Coronation of the Virgin* he had just completed suggests that altarpieces were frequently consecrated. Letter of 26 August 1509, Dürer/Conway 1958, pp. 69-70.

[17] Cf. Nagel 2000, pp. 50-51. Similarly, Henk van Os, cautions against overstating the role of liturgical function, which has been stressed in much recent research on altarpieces, noting that "altarpieces change in periods when the liturgy remains the same" and, conversely, that "there are changes in the liturgy that do not lead to a new altarpiece;" Van Os 1990, pp. 26. For a case study in "failed" reception, see Roger Crum's account of the Florentine response to Hugo van der Goes's *Portinari Altarpiece*, which, despite its considerable art historical importance, in fact, had little impact

even if altarpieces were not bound by formal rules, they were nevertheless deeply bound to tradition. Altarpieces gained authority and potency by adhering to established formats and well-known prototypes, which tended to temper any radical deviations from the norm. Over the course of the fifteenth century, however, this balance between evolution and tradition would become increasingly uneasy.

II. The Expansion of Lay Patronage

The successful institutionalization of Mass led Christians to pursue more direct and affective means of ensuring their salvation. The rise of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century, along with the concomitant proliferation of religious confraternities, encouraged the faithful to participate more actively in devotional practices.[18] Individuals seeking divine intercession believed they could appeal to the Virgin and saints as sympathetic advocates and mediators between themselves and God.[19] For those who could afford it, the most effective means of ensuring their salvation was a dedicated space in a religious institution for private mass-sayings, the nearer to the high altar the better.[20] By the end of the thirteenth century, there was already a sharp rise in testamentary bequests, in which funds were earmarked to provide for the foundation and ongoing maintenance of private chapels.[21]

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on subsequent Florentine altarpieces; Crum 1998.

[18] For the impact of the mendicant orders on popular spirituality, see Becker 1974; Verdon 1990; Lawrence 1994, esp. ch. 6, "The Mission to the Towns." For the rise of devotionalism, see Kieckhefer 1987.

[19] On the cult of saints in the late medieval period, see Bossy 1985, pp. 3-14; Eire 1986.

[20] The classic study on the rise of memorial chapels in late medieval Italy is Cohn 1992. For the fifteenth century, see Gaston 1987; Nelson 2006.

[21] Cohn 1992, pp. 211-23.

Individuals and confraternities did not buy chapels outright but were ceded patronage rights (*ius patronatus*) in return for an endowment, usually with the additional provision of funds for commemorative masses.[22] To this end, patrons decorated their chapels with altarpieces that typically featured a customized array of holy intercessors. The altarpiece, however, was just one component among a number of liturgical accessories that were required to properly outfit an altar.[23] It is important to remember that patrons funded chapels foremost to ensure that offices would be performed on behalf of their souls and those of their relations in order to lessen their time in purgatory. Thus, most *ius patronatus* contracts rather dealt with functional arrangements, including the initial purchase or transfer of the altar, the provision of funds for offices, and stipulations regarding the dedication, decoration, and maintenance of the chapel. In terms of the painting itself, most contracts tersely state the main subject, and specify the number of figures to be painted or refer to an agreed upon drawing or prototype.[24] Although arrangements for privately owned altarpieces still needed

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[22] For a useful overview of *ius patronatus*, see Humfrey 1993a, pp. 60-70, and more recently, Burke 2004, pp. 101ff. For a discussion of perpetual masses, see Cohn 1992, pp. 205-11.

[23] Little, however, is known regarding the allocation of funds toward other key components of the liturgical apparatus of chapels; cf. Gaston 2006, p. 335. For other investments in sacred furnishings for private chapels, such as chalices, vestments, altar cloths, and candle holders, see Cohn 1992, pp. 230-43.

[24] There has been considerable debate among scholars regarding the involvement of patrons and artists in determining iconographic programmes as well as the extent to which such programmes were charged with patron-specific meaning. Charles Hope, for example, argues that patrons enjoyed almost complete autonomy in choosing subject matter, and overwhelmingly opted simply for "finely executed images of saints" with little concern for sophisticated theological content; Hope 1990. In this vein, Creighton Gilbert argues that the absence of details regarding subject matter in extant contracts suggests that patrons left most decisions up to artists who, in turn, were guided by their extensive familiarity with iconographic traditions but otherwise enjoyed considerable latitude in executing a given subject; Gilbert 1998. These views have been recently challenged by several scholars. In his study of the altarpiece for S. Francesco at Borgo S. Sepolcro, commissioned from Sassetta in 1444, James R. Banker deals with a contract with precisely the sort of iconographic specificity that Gilbert had argued was absent from altarpiece contracts; Banker 1991. Jill Burke demonstrates that in many

the approval of ecclesiastical authorities, generally speaking, side altars were less strictly regulated than high altarpieces and thus permitted considerably more latitude in matters of form and content.[25] Presumably so long as the liturgically required accoutrements were in place and the proposed dedication met with approval from the church administration, patrons had more or less free reign in commissioning a team of artists and craftsmen to outfit their chapel as they saw fit, though they would likely stay within tacit parameters of prevailing conventions.

But as medieval suspicions against conspicuous consumption subsided with the growing prosperity of the Italian city-states, private altars – which were also highly visible sites of lavish expenditure – began to function as demonstrations of wealth and status.[26] With churches and chapels in such close proximity, private and corporate patrons paid close attention to the offerings of their peers. Altarpieces, by design, tended to adhere to established models; but as the economic historian, Richard Goldthwaite also points out, it was but a small step from imitation to open competition.[27] Perhaps the most striking early

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instances, not only were altarpiece programmes devised in concert with ecclesiastical authorities, but that patrons themselves were often subjected to considerable restraints in choosing their subjects; see Burke 2004, esp. pp. 124-27. Similarly, Michelle O'Malley's extensive study of painters' contracts during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries yields a number of different strategies by which painters and patrons came to a mutual agreement; O'Malley 2004; O'Malley 2005b, pp. 169-96. In the end, it seems more accurate to say that the extent to which patrons were free to decorate their ecclesiastical spaces as they saw fit seems to have varied from church to church.

[25] In general, most major masses of the liturgical calendar were celebrated at the main altar, with the exception of those for the feast days of saints, if there was a suitable altar available. Gaston 1987; Van der Ploeg 2002, pp. 111-12. On the functional differences between high altars and side altars, see Gardner von Teuffel 1999.

[26] For late medieval attitudes toward wealth, see Fraser Jenkins 1970, pp. 162-63; Goldthwaite 1993, pp. 204ff.

[27] Goldthwaite 1993, pp. 135-40.

examples of competitive patronage were the great Marian panels of Tuscany, some of which were commissioned not by ecclesiastical authorities, but rather by confraternities. Hans Belting marks the beginning of the trend with Coppo di Marcovaldo's *Madonna Enthroned* (fig. 12), which was painted around 1261 for the Servites in Siena in commemoration of the Sienese victory over Florence in the Battle of Montaperti in the previous year.[28] Instead of a series of compartmentalized figures, the *Maestà* type consisted of a single, large, gabled panel featuring a full-length image of the Madonna and Child. The figures themselves followed the Byzantine *hodegetria* type, which imparts a more communicative and sympathetic disposition than would a purely frontal representation, in keeping with the increasing importance attached to the Virgin's intercessory role in popular spirituality.[29] The revised iconography and large dimensions of the panel evidently resonated with Sienese viewers, and over the course of several decades, inter- and intra-city rivalries were played out in the form of increasingly monumental altarpieces.[30] This trend culminated with Duccio's *Maestà* (fig. 13), which was commissioned for the high altar of the Duomo in Siena in 1308, no doubt prompted by the recent completion of yet another large Marian panel by the same artist for Siena's Palazzo Pubblico.[31] In order to accommodate the sort of individualized

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[28] Belting 1994, pp. 387ff.; cf. Van Os 1988/90, vol. 1, pp. 22ff.

[29] Belting notes that the full-length format was derived from Romanesque 'throne of wisdom' sculptures, as suggested by the frontal pose of early examples of the *Maestà* type; Belting 1994, pp. 387-90.

[30] Belting 1994, pp. 395-98.

[31] For the *Maestà* altarpiece, see Stubblebine 1979, vol. 1, pp. 31-37. The Palazzo Pubblico altarpiece is since lost, but is known only through a handful of documents, including a payment of 4 December 1302 to Duccio for "a *Maestà* that he made and for a predella which are located on the altar of the Palace of the Nove;" Stubblebine 1979, vol. 1, pp. 26-31, p. 200.

iconography that his Sienese patrons must have demanded, Duccio laterally expanded the central group of the Virgin and Child to include a celestial audience of saints and angels who functioned as a veritable army of civic protectors.[32]

But as Belting points out, Duccio's *Maestà* marked a critical turning point in the evolution of the altarpiece in that its very newness – rather than its associations to old cult images and claims of miraculous origins – was crucial to the perception of its value.[33] In describing the elaborate procession that marked the installation of the *Maestà* on 9 June 1311, the fifteenth-century Sienese chronicler, Agnolo di Tura, breathlessly informs us that the altarpiece cost three thousand florins, an exaggeration perhaps meant to emphasize its considerable worth.[34] Whereas previous altarpieces for the Siena Duomo – the modest-sized, early-thirteenth-century *Madonna degli Occhi Grossi*, which was reconsecrated as the high altarpiece sometime around 1240, and Guido da Siena's *Madonna del Voto*, which had been commissioned as a votive offering following the Sienese victory at Montaperti in 1260 – had been venerated for their miraculous associations, there does not seem to have been any

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[32] Belting 1994, p. 398. Cimabue's *Maestà*, painted in 1290 for the high altar of S. Trinità in Florence, for example, is an earlier attempt to integrate patron-specific content into the *Maestà* format. Four Old Testament figures, symbolizing the foundations of Christendom, are shown as half-length figures inserted under the Virgin's throne (the prophets, Jeremiah and Isaiah, under the two side arches, with Abraham and King David under its substructure). For Cimabue's *Maestà*, see Bellosi 1998, no. 12, p. 380. Likewise, Duccio's *Rucellai Madonna*, commissioned by the Confraternity of the Laudesi in 1285 for their chapel in S. Maria Novella, incorporates a sophisticated iconographic programme of saints and Old Testament figures featured in thirty medallions that ring the frame, although their scale is arguably too small to be easily legible. For the Rucellai Madonna and the theological programme of the roundels, see Stubblebine 1979, vol. 1, pp. 21-26.

[33] Belting 1994, p. 408.

[34] Cf. Maginnis 2001, p. 63.

specific motivation for the commissioning of the *Maestà*,[35] other than to create an image befitting the recently completed cathedral by surpassing the large altarpieces of the Tuscan confraternities.[36]

The question of cost began to figure prominently in the commissioning of altarpieces in other major Italian centres. Samuel Cohn has shown that by the end of the fourteenth century, normal prices for sacred art had risen dramatically, effectively making church patronage the exclusive domain of wealthy individuals and confraternities.[37] A well-known document of the minutes of a meeting held in 1455 by the Confraternity of the Holy Trinity of Pistoia regarding the commissioning of a new altarpiece for their chapel in S. Trinita reveals an explicit attentiveness to this issue.[38] The confraternity members had unanimously agreed upon the figures to be depicted; but when it came to the amount of money to be allocated for the project, they were sharply divided. The issue was less a matter of what their coffers could bear than what was considered an appropriate amount to spend. Some members favoured something "mid-sized and low cost" and others believed that a small amount was

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[35] The principal account of the complicated history of the high altarpieces of Siena Cathedral is Garrison 1953-62, vol. 4, pp. 5-22, although there has been considerable disagreement since regarding Garrison's claim that the *Madonna del Voto* superceded the *Madonna degli Occhi Grossi*. For example, Bram Kempers has argued that the *Madonna del Voto* was meant for the new Cappella delle Grazie, which had been founded in gratitude to the Virgin following the Sienese victory; Kempers 1994, pp. 107-10. Regardless of which altarpiece was atop the high altar of the cathedral at the time, however, Duccio's *Maestà* was commissioned to replace an older, smaller altarpiece.

[36] Belting 1994, pp. 398-400.

[37] Cohn 1992, pp. 266-80.

[38] The document was originally published in Bacci 1904. The implications of the discussion have been discussed in a number of recent studies, including Rubin 1994, pp. 204-05; Blume 2003, p. 152; and O'Malley 2003.

insufficient considering the prominent status of the church.[39] According to the opinion of Bartolomeo Ferucci, the so-called "prudent" priest on hand as an advisor, the confraternity should spend between 150 and 200 florins, a substantial amount for the time, but in his opinion, they "could not have anything suitable to the place" for less.[40] The motion passed by a narrow margin of twenty to seventeen. In order to adhere to desired cost, the confraternity hired an established Florentine artist, Francesco Pesellino, who would have commanded a significantly higher rate than his provincial counterparts (the altarpiece was completed in 1460 by another Florentine, Fra Filippo Lippi, after Pesellino's death in 1457).[41] Even if opinions varied about what constituted an appropriate level of expenditure, the meeting nevertheless suggests that decisions regarding cost operated under the presumption that their value would be discernible to like-minded observers.[42]

Despite such worldly concerns about money and status, there is little doubt as to the piety of the confraternity members from Pistoia. The resultant altarpiece, which depicts the

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[39] Bacci 1904, p. 164: "Erano varie opinioni circha allo spendio. A una pareva una choxa mezana e di picholo chosto, alchuni altri [che] consideravano lo stato di detto luogho erano contrarli al picholo chosto e choxì confabulando tutti insieme chi voleva una choxa chi un'altra senza alchuna achordo;" translated in Gilbert 1980a, p. 115.

[40] Bacci 1904, p. 164: "Bartolomeo Farucci ... dixene che lui sapeva lo stato del luogho et entiandio se richordava che la Compagnia era di tale conditione già ab anticho che non si metteva a fare choxa alchuna di che elle non avesse l'onore, el perché allui pareva che volendo la Compagnia provedere d'una 'taula' d'altare non devesse spendere mancho di 150 o per infino 200 fiorini perché non pareva allui si potesse avere choxa che fusse conveniente al luogo se fusse minore prezio;" translated in Gilbert 1980a, p. 115.

[41] Through her study of painters' contracts, O'Malley observes that, in most cases, painters with workshops in major centres of art production earned more than provincial painters relying on local commissions. In particular, she compares the prices paid to Florentine and Pistoian painters between 1372 and 1532, and notes that the 200 florins paid to Pesellino and Lippi was more than six times the amount paid to the Pistoian painter, Bernardino del Signoraccio, for an altarpiece of comparable dimensions. O'Malley 2005b, pp. 151-53.

[42] Nelson and Zeckhauser 2008, pp. 28-31.

Trinity with the crucified Christ flanked by saints in the manner of a *sacra conversazione* (fig. 14) was an especially devout subject at a time when more secular concerns could also play a highly visible role in the decoration of their chapels. In fifteenth-century Florence, private chapels and liturgical accessories were emblazoned with family emblems (and, increasingly, donor portraits) that served to declare their ownership, to perpetuate the memory of the founders, and to attract devotees to pray for the souls of the deceased.[43] With criticisms mounting against the city's ruling class – and the Medici in particular – for what were seen as vainglorious and irreligious displays, learned rationalizations were marshalled in order to justify such worldly forms of patronage. The classical notion of magnificence – that is, the creation of monuments and possession of beautiful objects as the productive exercise of judgment, decorum, and dignity – was revived and promulgated by leading Florentine humanists such as Leon Battista Alberti, Matteo Palmieri, Timoteo Maffei, and Giovanni Pontano, all of whom championed spending on "public" works as a civic duty and a demonstration of virtue that not only ensured lasting fame but also collectively beautified the city.[44] All members of the ruling class were expected to contribute to this communal effort.[45]

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[43] Trexler 1980, pp. 91ff.; Cohn 1992, pp. 230ff.; Nelson and Zeckhauser 2008, ch. 5, "Private Chapels in Florence: A Paradise for Signallers."

[44] The medieval concept of magnificence as a Christian virtue, in which expenditures on public monuments were seen to benefit the community, was deployed most notoriously by the Augustine canon and Medici apologist, Timoteo Maffei, in his *In magnificentiae Cosmi Medicei Florentini detractores*, written between 1454 and 1456. The tract, which was composed expressly to counter mounting criticisms against Cosimo de Medici's ambitious architectural projects, was modelled after the writings of Thomas Aquinas, and construes his patronage as an act of pure charity. Less disingenuous discussions of magnificence, however, went back to the original classical source – the *Nichomachean Ethics* and other Aristotelian texts – and present magnificence as the virtuous exercise of erudition and judgment. On the idea of magnificence, particularly in fifteenth-century Florence, see Fraser Jenkins 1970; Welch 2002; Rubin 2007, ch. 2, "'Dello splendido vivere': On Necessary and Honorable Expenditure;" and, most recently, Howard 2008, who argues that the idea of magnificence was promulgated as early as the 1420s by Florentine mendicant preachers.

In the prologue to his treatise on architecture, *De re aedificatoria*, Alberti encouraged patrons to spend on architectural projects because they would benefit their fellow citizens who would "approve and express joy ... because they realize that you have used your wealth to increase not only your own honour and glory, but that of your family, your descendants, and the whole city."[46] Alberti's own patron, the wealthy Florentine merchant Giovanni Rucellai, claimed in very similar terms that spending money on public projects served "the glory of God, the honour of the city, and the commemoration of myself."[47] These sentiments could be readily extended to other forms of public spending, including church patronage, such that displays of wealth could be interpreted as demonstrations of piety. Although such justifications of material consumption did little to persuade contemporary critics, it is important to remember that at their core was a sincere belief that a beautiful altarpiece honoured God and inspired devotion, and thus, would serve the spiritual needs of those who commissioned it, if not those who worshipped before it. Thus, when Giovanni Tornabuoni hired Domenico Ghirlandaio to decorate his family chapel in S. Maria Novella, the contract describes the commission as "an act of piety and love of God, to the exaltation of his house and family, and the enhancement

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[45] See especially Burke 2004, ch. 2, "Private Wealth and Public Benefit: The Nasi and Del Pugliese Palaces." There were, however, tacit notions of status and decorum also at play. Expenditures were to be strictly commensurate with social standing, such that ostentation that was perceived to be above one's means was particularly frowned upon. The issue was specifically addressed by contemporary writers in a number of different contexts. Alberti advised that "the magnificence of a building should be adapted to the dignity of the owner," a point made more forcefully by Palmieri who warned that "he who would want ... to build a house resembling the magnificent ones of noble citizens would deserve blame if first he has not reached or excelled their virtue;" both quoted in Goldthwaite 1980, p. 83.

[46] Alberti/Orlandi 1966, vol. 1, p. 13 "Boni viri, quod parietam aut porticum duxeris lautissimam, quod ornamenta postium columnarum tectique imposueris, et tuam et suam vicem comprobant et congratulantur vel ea re maxime, quod intelligunt quidem te fructu hoc divitiarum tibi familiae posteris urbique plurimum decoris ad dignitatis adauxisse;" translated in Alberti/Rykwert 1988, p. 4.

[47] Quoted in Baxandall 1988, p. 2.

of said church and chapel."[48]

III. Modes of Valuation in Fifteenth-Century Altarpieces

Art history's persistent focus on pictorially innovative artists does not always square with the fact that within the realm of religious patronage many, if not most, patrons simply wanted an altarpiece that was, above all, efficacious. Any altarpiece was, of course, expected to be respectably accomplished; however, most clients favoured established subjects and styles, which assured them that they were getting a proven commodity that was in keeping with prevailing tastes. The so-called "*moda et forma*" clause – a stipulation requiring painters to follow the example of a specified altarpiece – appears in contracts dating back to the beginning of the fifteenth century.[49] These were not meant to be "copies" in a strict sense, but rather referred more generally to conventions of iconography, composition, and/or format. Many clients would have requested the painter follow an existing altarpiece as a desirable model (often with the added stipulation that their altarpiece would be in some way grander and more impressive) if the prototype was a prominent altarpiece belonging to an influential patron, to whom the clients wished to display a corporate or political affiliation.[50] For example, in 1461 the Florentine confraternity, the Compagnia della Purificazione e di San Zanobi, requested that Benozzo Gozzoli follow the model of Fra Angelico's altarpiece at

[48] Quoted in Chambers 1971, p. 173.

[49] O'Malley explains that the "*moda e forma*" clause in contracts usually referred more generally to loose relationship between iconographic "types" rather than strictly determining subjects, and might even refer to the frame as well. Contracts are generally consistent in referring to the model according to its place, with no mention of the painter, even when he would have been widely known In instances where the altarpiece was to closely imitate the model, painters were instead directed to "copy" (*retrahere*) it; O'Malley 2005b, pp. 222-31; cf. Glasser 1977, pp. 65ff

[50] On the cultural politics of altarpiece "copies," see Holmes 2004a, pp. 50ff; O'Malley 2005a.

S. Marco as a means of demonstrating their association with the monastery as well as the Medici family, the confraternity's benefactors, who had commissioned it.[51] Similarly, churches belonging to the same monastic order often commissioned altarpieces modelled on the high altarpiece of the mother house. Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Coronation of the Virgin* (fig. 15), which had been painted for the high altar of the Franciscan convent of S. Girolamo at Narni in 1486, was stipulated as a prototype in at least four other altarpieces in other Franciscan houses in Umbria.[52] No less an artist than Raphael, already well known in his native Umbria, was hired by the Poor Clares at S. Maria di Monteluce in 1503 for a substantial fee of 177 ducats to undertake such a commission (fig. 16).[53] A second contract for the commission, dated to late 1505, specifies that the altarpiece was to be executed in the "perfection, proportion, quality and condition of the altarpiece in Narni."[54] Raphael, however, kept postponing work on the commission – which was not even begun at the time

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[51] The contract of 23 Oct 1461 begins with the stipulation that "la fighura di nostra Donna chon la sedia nel modo et forma et chon ornamenti chrome et in similitudine della tavola dello altare maggiore di sancto Marcho di Firenze." For the contract and its relation to Medicean patronage, see Cole-Ahl 2000, pp. 60-61. For the relationship between the Fra Angelico's and Gozzoli's altarpieces; see O'Malley 2005b, pp. 233-36.

[52] These are: Lo Spagna's *Coronation* at Monte Santo di Todi (1507); another copy from Lo Spagno's workshop for S. Martino in Trevi (1522); Giulio Romano and Gianfrancesco Penni's altarpiece for S. Maria di Monteluce, which had been originally commissioned from Raphael; and a copy by Lo Spagno's pupil, Jacopo Siciliano, for the Convent of the Annunziata (1541). For the Narni altarpiece, see Cadogan 2000, no. 31, pp. 255-56. For its derivations, see O'Malley 2005b, pp. 238ff.

[53] Suor Battista, *Memoriale di Monteluce*, 12 December 1505: "Ma fece trovare el maestro el migliore li fusse consigliato da più citadini et ancho da li nostri venerandi patri li quali havevano vedute le opere sue;" Shearman 2003, doc. 1505/4. This *ricordo* from a now-lost manuscript refers to the 1505 contract between Raphael and the Monteluce *suore*. For Raphael's early career, see Jones and Penny 1983, ch. 1, "Raphael Son of Giovanni Santi of Urbino;" Ferino Pagden 1986.

[54] Shearman 2003, doc. 1505/2: "Facere, construere et dipingere una tavola sive cona [ancona] sopra l'altare grande de la chiesa de fuore de dicta chiesa de quilla perfectione, proportione, qualita e conditione della tavola sive cona existente in Narni nel la chiesa de San Girolamo del luoco menore et omne de colore et figure numero et più et ornamenti commo in dicta tavola se contiene."

of his death in 1520 and was eventually completed by his former assistants, Giulio Romano and Gianfrancesco Penni, in 1525 – suggesting that he may have resisted the restrictive conditions of the contract, especially once his fame began to quickly rise after moving to Florence in 1504.[55]

Yet many so-called minor painters of the Renaissance were well established in their own day, running productive and highly profitable shops making altarpieces that were "copies" of popular subjects.[56] Neri di Bicci, for example, was all but ignored in accounts of fifteenth-century Florentine painting until recent decades due in large part to his repetitive use of figure types and formulaic compositions as well as his seeming lack of interest in the pictorial innovations of his peers. However, scholarly interest in the painter has been sparked by the move toward such contextual concerns as patronage and workshop production; Neri's *Ricordanze* – his detailed account books dating from 1453 to 1475 – are arguably the most comprehensive set of documents concerning any painter's practice during the fifteenth century.[57] The *Ricordanze* also reveal him to be the most prosperous painter in Florence of

[55] For the complicated history of the Monteluce *Coronation*, see Shearman 1961a, Appendix II, "The Monteluce Altarpiece;" Meyer zur Capellen 2001, no. 67, pp. 210-20.

[56] See for example Megan Holmes's recent study of the so-called "Lippi and Pesellino Imitators," a Florentine workshop that specialized in copies after Fra Filippo Lippi, which ranged from high-quality "exact" copies to smaller devotional works; Holmes 2004a. For fifteenth-century Florence, see also Bernacchioni 1992; Filippini 1992. For workshop practices in the broader context of the mercantile economy, see Goldthwaite 2009, ch. 5, "Artisans, Shopkeepers, Workers." For the sixteenth century, see La France 2003; Wood 2005.

[57] The documents, although not previously unknown, were only published in their entirety in 1976 in an annotated edition by Bruno Santi; Neri di Bicci 1976. A useful overview of the *Ricordanze* is provided in Borsook 1979. For Neri di Bicci, see especially Thomas 1995, ch. 12, "Epilogue: The Painter's Practice – New Perspectives on Neri di Bicci."

the day.[58] His altarpieces were widely popular and well esteemed among the middle-ranking patrons who constituted the bulk of his clientele, as well as members of the patrician class. While Neri's altarpieces can hardly be considered innovative in artistic terms, he pragmatically incorporated elements drawn from an up-to-date repertory of compositions and figures types, which he made available to his clients in either a polyptych or *all'antica* format, according to their preference.[59]

His clients would have requested religious personages or sacred stories specific to their needs, which could be quickly and efficiently produced from Neri's own catalogue of stock figures and subjects. Generally speaking, his paintings feature gold and rich pigments put in the service of matter-of-fact presentations of their subject. A typical altarpiece by his workshop, such as the *Madonna Enthroned with Saints* (fig. 17), combines a flat, gold-ground *sacra conversazione* with a perspectival throne composed of a naïve amalgamation of classical ornament. Contracts from the *Ricordanze* demonstrate that virtually every aspect of the altarpiece was customizable, including the size of the panel, the number of figures depicted, the materials used, the ornateness of the framing elements, and the extent to which the panel was completed by Neri himself.[60] Accordingly, his notebooks reveal a standard system of pricing calculations based on stable, quantifiable measures.[61] As Nagel stresses, this practice of creating highly customizable altarpieces according to a straight-forward fee

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[58] Holmes 2003, p. 214.

[59] As Holmes observes, Neri's practice reflects broader mid-century trends in which medieval traditions persisted alongside the newer *all'antica* classicism; Holmes 2003, pp. 215-17. On Neri's adaptations of Fra Angelico, for example, see Thomas 1995, pp. 235-37.

[60] Thomas 1995, pp. 236ff.

[61] Borsook 1979.

structure was in keeping with devotional practices whereby "money was converted into art and masses, which in turn brought divine favours to the commissioner."[62]

Likewise, the Church had been quick to realize the considerable income that could be generated from the business of lay patronage: endowments from *ius patronatus* helped fund new constructions and renovations and expedited the decoration of newly completed interiors; and the saying of offices became virtually an industry unto itself.[63] By the fifteenth century, the rapid proliferation of privately owned chapels threatened to consume church interiors altogether. Even though the expansive mother churches of the mendicant orders in Florence and Venice had been built with lay patronage in mind and included a series of semi-enclosed chapels on either side of the high altar that extended across the transepts, it was scarcely enough to accommodate the devotional needs of the laity. Nave walls were filled with a riot of frescoes and altarpieces, along with an assortment of other religious images, tombs, and *ex votos*.

By the 1430s, there were already signs of resistance against lay patronage in churches. In his *Summa Theologica*, written around mid-century, St Antoninus, the Archbishop of Florence, spoke of the need to adorn churches, while despairing of the "excesses, pomps, and many vanities of arms, pictures, vases of gold, and suchlike things" that had encroached upon sacred spaces.[64] Such was the extent of the proliferation of images in Florentine churches

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[62] Nagel 2003, p. 326.

[63] At the church of S. Lorenzo in Florence, for example, the salaries of its prior, canons, and chaplains were derived principally from patronal endowments. On *ius patronatus* as a source of income by religious institutions, see especially Gaston 1987.

[64] St Antoninus, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 3, vol. 564: "Pulcra: 'Maxime sacerdoti hoc conventi ornare templum Dei honore congruo, ut etiam hoc cultu aula Dei Resplendeat.' Non tamen dicit, quod fiant superfluitates, pompae, et multae vanitates armorum, picturarum, vasorum aureorum et huiusmodi;"

that in his discussion of altars in the *De re aedificatoria*, Alberti threw up his hands in frustration with contemporary practices in an impassioned diatribe against the proliferation of altars in churches. He writes:

> There followed the practice of our own times, which I only wish some man of gravity would think it fit to reform. I say this with all due respect to our bishops, who, to preserve their dignity, allow the people to see them scarcely once in the year of festivals, yet so stuff everything with altars, and even ... I shall say no more.[65]

Harold Saalman suggests that it is likely that such concerns were at the heart of the construction of the new S. Lorenzo in Florence.[66] Although Brunelleschi's design for the church is celebrated as a landmark of early Renaissance architecture for its revolutionary plan generated from the consistent repetition of the square module and elegantly articulated with classical ornament, it was also the earliest church to accommodate separate chapel spaces opening onto the transept arms and along the side aisles on either side of the nave.[67] With each of these chapels identical in size – a quality usually discussed in terms of Brunelleschi's rigorous modular design – organizers surely intended to regulate the sort of competitive lay patronage that was evidently proving to be problematic in other Florentine churches.[68] In the building programme drawn up in 1434, the Chapter of Canons at S. Lorenzo introduced

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quoted and translated in Burke 2004, p. 127. For St Antonius's views on matters of art, see also Gilbert 1959; and Gilbert 1990.

[65] Book VII, ch. 13, in Alberti/Orlandi 1966, vol. 2, p. 629: "Successere haec tempora, quae utinam vir quispiam gravis, pace pontificum, reprehendenda duceret: qui, cum ipsi dignitatis tuendae gratia vix kalendis annuis potestatem populo faciant visendi sui, omnia usque adeo circumferta reddidere altaribus et interdum ... non dico plus;" translated in Alberti/Rykwert 1988, p. 229.

[66] Saalman 1978, esp. p. 363.

[67] In the decades following the church's completion, the festal calendar vastly expanded to accommodate the masses required by its privately owned chapels. Gaston 1987, pp. 119-20.

[68] Saalman 1978, p. 362.

unusually stringent rules regarding the outfitting of the chapels. No frescoes would be permitted, and all altarpieces would have to conform to a uniform format described as a "tabula quadrata et sine civoriis," that is, a single square panel set within a modern frame (that is, without gothicizing pinnacles).[69] This type of altarpiece was more harmonious with Brunelleschi's architectural vision, but the regulation of chapel decoration also posed a challenge to the prevailing norms of *ius patronatus*. In turn, the development of the *tavola quadrata* in Florence during 1430s and 1440s entailed an analogous adaptation in the way that altarpieces were conceived by painters and understood by viewers.[70]

IV. Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura* and the Development of the *Pala*

By the beginning of fifteenth century, tastes in religious art were beginning to move toward greater naturalism, in which representations of the spiritual realm and episodes from sacred

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[69] Quoted in Ruda 1978, p. 361. Although it is frequently assumed that the contract refers to an *all'antica* frame , as Christoph Merzenich points out, the contract more likely refers generally to a post-and-lintel structure as seen in other frames from the period; Merzenich 1996, pp. 136-39. Brunelleschi repeated the architectural scheme of S. Lorenzo for the patrons of S. Spirito, which was designed shortly thereafter and built between 1445 and 1482. The plan of S. Spirito was, in effect, a refinement – and endorsement – of S. Lorenzo's chapel programme, and boasted even more chapels, now running around the entire perimeter of the building. With so many altarpieces destroyed during the devastating fire of 1471, many patrons commissioned new altarpieces upon the completion of the church. Most of these altarpieces were executed in a remarkably consistent format and style by a handful of prominent Florentine painters, including Sandro Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, Francesco Botticini, and Raffaellino del Garbo. As Burke argues in her recent study of Florentine patronage, this sort of "communal" lay patronage was not uncommon in Florence, as it also served both to communicate political alliances and maintain the delicate balance of power within the city. For the altarpieces at S. Spirito, see Capretti 1996b; Burke 2004, ch. 3, "Ch. 3, Family, Church, Community: The Appearance of Power in Santo Spirito".

[70] Christa Gardner von Teuffel argues that in Florence the innovations in altarpiece design developed in a close relationship with the new *all'antica* manner in architecture such that the *tavola quadrata* was adopted in Florence sooner there than other major Italian centres; Gardner von Teuffel 1982, pp. 22ff; cf. Schmidt 1992; Capretti 1996a. Peter Humfrey concurs, and points out that in Venice, where *all'antica* architecture was adopted in a piecemeal and often decorative fashion, triptychs and polyptychs were able to survive well into the sixteenth century. Humfrey 1994, p. 152.

history presented matters of faith in more human terms and also within recognizably earthly settings.[71] This shift in devotional habits coincided with painters' own efforts to seek recognition for their profession as an intellectual discipline rather than a manual craft. The familiar account of the rise of the status of the artist during the fifteenth century needs little rehearsing here. In short, a growing dissatisfaction arose among certain circles of painters and sculptors that their profession was associated with the skilled crafts and not the more esteemed, intellectual pursuits of the liberal arts. Myriad interrelated factors contributed to these developments, among them: the increased emphasis on verisimilitude in art, which required "scientific" skills as much as laborious craftsmanship; antiquarian knowledge of Classical texts in which the painters and sculptors of ancient Greece were celebrated for their achievements; and the consequent development of mythological and allegorical genres of painting in self-conscious emulation of famed works of antiquity.[72] Painters and humanists put forth the idea that beauty arose from the artist's *ingegno*, that is to say, as a manifestation of his individual manner, his mastery of difficult pictorial problems, and, increasingly, his innovativeness and originality.

These ideas were expressed most forcefully in the fifteenth century in Leon Battista Alberti's treatise on painting, *De pictura*, which was tantamount to a manifesto for a humanistic approach to painting. Indeed, there was a conceptual chasm between *De pictura*, composed sometime around 1435, and Cennino Cennini's handbook for painters, *Il libro*

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[71] Verdon 1990.

[72] The literature on fifteenth-century discourses of painting as a liberal art is vast. See, for example: Lee 1940; Wittkower and Wittkower 1963, ch. 1, "From Craftsman to Artist"; Panofsky 1968; Conti 1978-81; Baxandall 1988; Kristeller 1990; Ames-Lewis 2000.

d'arte, written only decades before, which concerned itself primarily with practical aspects of painting, such as mixing pigments and fresco techniques. Alberti, by contrast, was a learned polymath and wrote in Latin in an elevated style. In this sense, the treatise would have appealed to patrons and their advisors in order to help them understand recent innovations in painting, and, more importantly, to encourage them to commission works that would be in accordance with his principles.[73]

Alberti argued for a new type of painting that would be created and evaluated according to the artist's ability to invent learned compositions and depict them with unprecedented verisimilitude achieved through mathematical perspective and diligent study after nature. Central to Alberti's programme is his notion of the *istoria*, a complex, multi-figured, narrative scene, which he claims is the greatest possible achievement of the painter.[74] But he also provides the treatise with a coherent and compelling theoretical undergirding by appropriating key concepts from Classical rhetorical texts, which were unassailable in their intellectual pedigree.[75] The *istoria*, Alberti explains, uses finely calibrated and decorously observed variety to please and move the viewer, an ideal that was derived directly from Ciceronian ideals of rhetorical composition (*De oratore*, 2.27.115, 2.28.121). Similarly Alberti's breakdown of the painter's task into a three-part process of circumscription,

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[73] A translation into Italian, presumably intended for his architects and artisans – and bearing a dedication to the architect, Filippo Brunelleschi – was written the following year. On the use of *De pictura* as a pedagogical text for painters, see Wright 1984.

[74] Book II, ch. 35, in Alberti/Grayson 1972, p. 73.

[75] On the relation of *De pictura* to classical writings on oratory, see Gilbert 1945. Numerous studies since have advanced varying interpretations regarding which sources were used and the nature of their relation to *De pictura*, but all are unanimous on the matter of his dependence on Cicero and Quintilian, in particular. See also for example, Spencer 1957; Baxandall 1971, pp. 121-39; Wright 1984; Rosand 1987; Goldstein 1991; Grafton 1999.

composition, and reception of light parallels Quintilian's precepts regarding the rhetorical model of invention, disposition, and elocution (*Institutio Oratoria*, 3.3).[76] Classical texts on oratory were becoming a common fixture in humanist circles, but these borrowings were also deployed out of necessity: painting had no theory of its own, ancient or modern. Whereas ancient accounts of painting such as Pliny's *Natural History* were largely descriptive, treatises on rhetoric and poetics frequently used analogies to painting to explain the creative process. Although classical authors never meant to imply that painting was on a par with the literary arts, these analogies were readily construed as such by Renaissance readers and put into service to create a contemporary theory of painting that could claim its place among the liberal arts.

When Alberti wrote *De pictura* there were few existing examples of the type of painting he had in mind. Rather he drew his examples from celebrated paintings of antiquity known only to him from ancient ekphrastic texts: Timanthes' lost painting of the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*; Apelles' lost *Calumny*; ancient representations of the Three Graces; and the *Bearing of the Dead Meleager*; the one notable exception being Giotto's fresco of the *Navicella* from old St Peter's in Rome.[77] In other words, Alberti conceived the *istoria* principally as a Classical genre of painting rather than a Christian one.[78] This was in part motivated by his antiquarian interests as well as his desire to create modern works that could rival the legendary mythologies of antiquity. But Alberti must have also recognized that the

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[76] Lee 1940, Appendix II, pp. 264-65.

[77] On the use of ekphrasis among the early humanists, see Baxandall 1971, pp. 78-96. For the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Alpers 1960; Land 1994.

[78] Cf. Rosand 1987, p. 158.

essential qualities of the *istoria* – verisimilar settings, complex arrangements of figures, and dramatic movement – were virtually antithetical to the hieratic and rigid arrangements of contemporary altarpieces, which were governed by tacit, but nevertheless firm, pictorial conventions. Although religious fresco painting had already proven itself to be conducive to the naturalistic representation of narrative subjects, in *De re aedificatoria*, Alberti explicitly disapproves of fresco painting in church interiors on account of his desire to instate a more rational and ordered environment. He is scarcely able to bridle his disdain for the chaotic state of most church interiors, which he believes to be blighted by garish and distracting decorations, before concluding with a simple plea he attributes to Cicero: "Let us have some dignity for all that."[79] Rather, Alberti recommends "detached painted panels [i.e., altarpieces] rather than pictures applied directly to the wall," and sculptural reliefs most of all.[80] But in *De pictura*, he seems to have had altarpieces specifically in mind when he took direct aim at painters who "make excessive use of gold because they think it lends a certain majesty to painting," which was both less attractive and less skilful than creating the illusion of gold with plain colours.[81] It is one of Alberti's only comments regarding contemporary practice in *De pictura*.

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[79] Book VII, ch. 10, in Alberti/Orlandi 1966, vol. 2, p. 609: "Haec isti; alii contra. Cicero Platonem imitatus lege admonendos putavit suos, ut in templis spreta ornamentorum varietate atque illecebris candorem in primis probarent; tamen – inquit – specimen esto;" translated in Alberti/Rykwert 1988, pp. 218-20.

[80] Book VII, ch. 10, in Alberti/Orlandi 1966, vol. 2, p. 609: "Intra in templo tabulas potius habere volo pictas quam picturas parietibus ipsis inductas;" translated in Alberti/Rykwert 1988, p. 220.

[81] Book II, ch. 49, p. 92, in Alberti/Grayson 1972: "At sunt qui auro inmodice utantur, quod aurum putent quandam historiae afferre maiestatem;" translated in Alberti/Grayson 1972, p. 93.

Alberti did not single-handedly invent perspective or naturalism; rather the *De pictura* gave voice to the practices of a handful of like-minded painters whose work could already be seen in and around Florence, especially in its churches. In a series of altarpieces of the 1430s and 1440s, Fra Angelico progressively refined the pictorial format that has since become known as a *sacra conversazione* in reference to its characteristic subject of an anachronistic assembly of saints presented within a unified pictorial space.[82] In the Annalena altarpiece of the early 1430s (fig. 18), the figures are arranged within a shallow proscenium-like setting backed by an elaborately brocaded hanging, rendered in gilt to form a close substitute for gold ground, which in turn screens a series of niches that are highly suggestive of the articulation of polyptychs.[83] Although the Annalena altarpiece mimicked the material and morphological vocabulary of the polyptych, it was, nevertheless, an Albertian window, opening onto an ostensibly terrestrial setting organized according to mathematically derived perspective. William Hood has plausibly hypothesized that the altarpiece may have originally been destined for the Medici chapel in S. Lorenzo, and could have been the intended model for the chapel altarpieces as described in the building programme discussed above. In his later panel for the high altar of S. Marco (fig. 19), also commissioned by the Medici, Fra Angelico moved away from such literal evocations of the polyptych in favour of a more naturalistic approach, using, for the first time, the *tavola quadrata* and restricting gold

[82] For Fra Angelico's altarpieces in the 1430s, see Cole-Ahl 1981; Hood 1993, pp. 97-104. Although the term *sacra conversazione* is a much later art historical invention – and, as many scholars have pointed out, is misleading in its implication of communication between the figures – it usefully describes the development of a new altarpiece genre of altarpiece, in which saints are grouped within a unified pictorial field, rather than in the compartments of a polyptych. For the historiography of the term "*sacra conversazione*," see Goffen 1979, pp. 198-99.

[83] The Annalena altarpiece was never installed at S. Lorenzo, and was subsequently removed to the Dominican convent of S. Vincenzo d'Annalena in 1452; Hood 1993, pp. 104-07.

pigments to the halos and the *trompe l'oeil* devotional panel in the foreground.[84] By situating the figures within a dramatically receding and richly ornamented *hortus conclusus*, the Frate maintains a perceptible distinction between the viewer's space and the sacred realm.

While the *sacra conversazione* continued to dominate altarpiece production well into the next century, the increasing taste for naturalism in painting also encouraged the development of narrative subjects – which had previously been consigned to the *predella* – within the main panel itself.[85] The polyptych, with its small, irregularly shaped compartments, was maladapted to the complex groupings of figures typically required of narrative subjects. Certainly the introduction of the unified pictorial space facilitated the development of narrative subjects in practical terms. Few examples of narrative altarpieces existed prior to the late fourteenth century – the *Birth of the Virgin* and the *Presentation in the Temple* altarpieces painted in the 1340s by Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the 1340s for the Siena cathedral being precocious and otherwise atypical for their time.[86] The popularity in Florence beginning in the late fourteenth century of images of the Annunciation, for example – a subject ill-suited to the polyptych format due to its empty central axis and

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[84] Hood 1993, pp. 107ff.

[85] On the development of narrative subjects in altarpieces, see Gardner 1987; Burckhardt 1988; Humfrey 1993a, pp. 221-29; Nagel 2000, ch. 4, "The Altarpiece in the Age of History Painting."

[86] Among the earliest narrative altarpieces are a group of four side altars commissioned in the 1330s and 1340s for Siena Cathedral, each depicting a scene from the Life of the Virgin set within a triple-arched central panel, and flanked by two patron saints (one of whom was the dedicatee of the altar) in separate panels. These were the altar of St Ansano, along with St Massima (Martini's *Annunciation*), St Victor, along with St Corona (Bartolommeo Bulgarini's *Adoration of the Shepherds*), St Savino (Pietro Lorenzetti's *Birth of the Virgin*), and St Crescenzio (Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Presentation in the Temple*). The altarpieces by the Lorenzetti brothers, however, are set apart by their forward-looking interior settings – a simple domestic interior in the former and a church crossing in the latter – which combine descriptive detail and plausible three-dimensional space. For these altarpieces, see Norman 2003, pp. 111-18.

domestic setting – led to a very active and fruitful of period of artistic experimentation as painters searched for better ways to accommodate the scene, in which bipartite polyptychs eventually gave way to simpler, rectangular formats.[87] Other popular subjects such as the Coronation of the Virgin or the Lamentation readily leant themselves to the sort of symmetrical arrangement, abstracted settings, and static composition that had more in common with polyptych conventions.[88]

But the differences between the polyptych and the unified field altarpiece, or *pala*, went beyond simply implementing one-point perspective in *sacre conversazioni* or adapting to the visual demands of narrative scenes: the *pala* was ontologically a different sort of image.[89] In the polyptych, embossed and tooled images were knitted together within arched compartments, surmounted by an array of gables and pinnacles to form a multi-media, micro-architectural structure that was often encrusted with gold leaf and rich pigments. Figures were disposed evenly across all surfaces and situated rigidly at the front of the picture plane as symbolic objects of devotional address.[90] By contrast, the *pala* was meant to be understood as notionally non-existent. Rather, the main panel offered the viewer a single

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[87] Merzenich 1996, pp. 125-37.

[88] Cf. Humfrey 1993a, pp. 221ff.; Merzenich 1996, p. 121.

[89] The earliest "unified" altarpieces simply took the form of a polyptych in which the dividing members were removed. In Andrea Orcagna's *Christ in Glory* of 1357 for the Strozzi chapel in S. Maria Novella in Florence, for example, the polyptych format was still implied in its arched profile and the lingering vestigial colonettes formed by the actual capitals and bases in the enframement. On the innovatory use of a unified pictorial field of the Strozzi Altarpiece, see Kreytenberg 1992. Indeed, the Strozzi altarpiece was unusual enough that it did not spawn any imitators for several decades suggesting that there was considerable resistance to this change in format. It was eventually followed by Agnolo Gaddi's altarpiece of 1375, which also appeared in the same church; Goffen 1979, p. 219. On the early development of the unified pictorial field, see also Van Os 1990, vol. 2, pp. 163ff.

[90] Cf. Holmes 1999, pp. 121ff.

scene of sacred personages who appeared to be present in a space co-existensive with their own. The image itself was distinct from its frame, which now served to delineate the limits of the picture field as well as to provide a suitably monumental setting. Frames, in turn, were vastly simplified in their profile, and typically took the form of a classical aedicule, that is, flanking columns surmounted by an entablature as typically used for doors and windows.[91] In practical terms, the construction of the enframement and the creation of the painted panel had become entirely separate practices. With the polyptych, the altarpiece structure was finished first and delivered to the painter, who would then decorate its surface; with the *pala*, on the other hand, it was not uncommon for the frame to be constructed only after the main panel had been completed.[92]

The main panel was thus the dominant component of the altarpiece and the exclusive domain of the painter. However, in some respects the *pala* presented real drawbacks when compared with the representational possibilities afforded by the polyptych. As Christoph Merzenich observes:

> The long-lasting success of the polyptych was primarily due to its ability to contain and hierarchically order a variety of images. These images represented figures and events from different terrestrial times and places, and even from transcendent space. In this sense the advent of the *tavola quadrata* with is single rectangular panel implied an impoverishment of the visual message.[93]

Indeed, despite the importance placed on the perspectival *pale* of Fra Angelico and others in art historical narratives of the fifteenth century, outside of select Florentine circles, artists and

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[91] For the development of architectural altar frames in fifteenth-century Florence, see Callahan and Cooper 2010.

[92] On the manufacture of altarpieces, see Gilbert 1977; Gardner von Teuffel 1983.

[93] Merzenich 1996, p. 120.

patrons were, in fact, slow to adopt the format.[94] Even within Florence, Neri's continued success through to his death in 1475 in producing altarpieces that traded in assemblage-like arrays of saints and rich material embellishments, demonstrates that the single-field altarpieces could nevertheless retain the many of the conventions of the polyptych.

One of the main challenges posed by the *pala* was how to give form to the sacred within a pictorial vocabulary of naturalism.[95] Marcia Hall refers to this tactic as "making strange," which encompasses any number of devices used by painters to disrupt and defamiliarize otherwise mimetic images in order to engage the viewer's devotional attention and to convey the mystery of the celestial sphere.[96] For example, Andrea Mantegna's *sacra conversazione* painted in the late 1450s for the high altar of S. Zeno in Verona (fig. 20) – one of the acknowledged landmarks of fifteenth-century painting due to its ambitious organizational logic and rigorous application of perspective – tempers his characteristically severe classicism in favour of a highly decorative treatment.[97] The trabeated piers are richly

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[94] It is useful to remember that the direct influence exerted by Alberti's *De pictura* itself was arguably quite circumscribed for most of the fifteenth century. With the Latin edition only appearing in 1485, and no further editions or translations appearing in Italy until the mid-sixteenth century, circulation of his ideas was limited to select ambits, and suggests that the immediate demand for the book must have been readily satisfied by the circulation of manuscripts. As Michael Baxandall points out, by mid-century only Piero della Francesca and Andrea Mantegna, could be properly described as Albertian – two artists, he further notes, who had a exceptionally "academic bent" and were likely in contact with Alberti himself. Baxandall 1971, p. 133; cf. Grafton 2000, pp. 145ff.

[95] Cf. Kleinbub, ch. 1, "Making the Invisible Visible."

[96] Hall 2011, see esp, ch. 2, "The Dilemma of Naturalism."

[97] The S. Zeno altarpiece was painted for the abbot Gregorio Correr between 1457 and 1459 for the high altar of the church. For the S. Zeno altarpiece, see Lightbown 1986, pp. 64-76, 406-08. A similar approach could be seen in the late altarpieces of Carlo Crivelli – a contemporary of Mantegna and a fellow students under the Paduan painter, Francesco Squarcione – in which the decorative and symbolic use of vegetal imagery assumed even greater prominence. Cf. Burckhardt 1988, pp. 56ff; Lightbown 1986, p. 69.

encrusted with symbolic reliefs and decorative coloured marbles, while garlands of fruit are strung from the front of the foreground entablature such that they appear to hang between the fictive piers of the painting and the corresponding columns of the frame, in effect drawing attention to the liminal threshold – and discontinuity – between real and fictive spaces. By contrast, Mantegna's near-contemporary *St Luke* polyptych (fig. 21), an otherwise traditional gold-ground polyptych, was significantly more restrained, with no recourse to any form of pictorial embellishment to complement its austere figures.[98] Jeffrey Ruda has similarly remarked on the vastly different stylistic treatment of two altarpieces of the *Coronation* of comparable dimensions and comparable costs both of which were produced by Fra Filippo Lippi in the 1440s: one densely populated with a sweeping composition of saints, angels, biblical figures and contemporary portraits (fig. 22); the other, a restrained, perspectival array of saints depicted with traditional gold nimbuses (fig. 23).[99] The Florentine patrons of each were of comparable high social rank and financial standing; however, the circumstances of their commissions were very different. For their altarpiece in the family chapel in the Benedictine church of S. Bernardo at Arezzo, Lippi produced for the heirs of Carlo Marsuppini a more traditional and unembellished composition. For the Maringhi family, who financed the high altarpiece at S. Ambrogio – one of Florence's major sites for rituals and procession – Lippi created something exuberant and modern. Ruda thus advises that we should not think of the stylistic development of individual artists in linear terms – but rather

[98] The *St Luke* altarpiece was painted for the abbot Mauro dei Folperti between August 1453 and November 1454 for the chapel of St Luke in S. Giustina in Padua. On the *St Luke* polyptych, see Lightbown 1986, pp. 43-46, 401-03.

[99] For a comparison of the two altarpieces, see Ruda 1984.

as being adaptable according to the requirements of individual commissions.

The same argument can also be applied more broadly to long-standing art historical accounts of the development of naturalism in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, especially in terms of sacred art. Thus, the tenacity of gold pigments and pictorial abundance even after the widespread adoption of the *pala* toward the end of the fifteenth century was not so much a matter of old habits dying hard, so to speak, or even a resistance to unfamiliar modes of representation. Rather, it seems more simply due to the continued relevance and utility of material richness in religious patronage. In the 1480s, Cosimo Rosselli, according to Vasari, sought to win the favour of Sixtus IV over Perugino, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Pinturicchio, and Signorelli for his work on the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel by strategically embellishing his frescoes with lavish colour and detail throughout.[100] In a characteristically revealing, Vasari relays that although Cosimo had been derided by his peers for his inferior methods, his frescoes nevertheless won the enthusiastic admiration of Sixtus, who "bade all the others cover their pictures with the best blues that could be found, and to pick them out with gold, to the end that they might be similar to those of Cosimo in colouring and richness."[101] Although Vasari is careful to point out that the pope possessed "little judgment" when it came to matters of painting, the episode is telling of the persistence of attitudes that were favourable toward material splendour and dense ornamentation. It is only with the restoration of the Sistine walls, which was completed in 1999, that it has been possible to

[100] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 498-99. For the rivalry among the artists working on the Sistine Chapel frescoes, see Goffen 2002, pp. 20ff.

[101] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 3, pp. 446: "E così fattogli dare il premio, comandò agli'altri che tutti coprissero le loro pitture dei migliori az[z]urri che trovassero e le toccassino d'oro, acciòche fussero simili a quelle di Cosimo nel colorito e nell'essere ricchezza;" translated in Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 498-99.

confirm that all ten of the frescoes were liberally embellished with gold leaf. Even the Sistine Ceiling was finished with gilt embellishments before Michelangelo abandoned them midway through its completion, much to the chagrin of Julius II, according to his biographer, Ascanio Condivi.[102]

The *pala* was also fundamentally a different type of economic object, and as such, it presented considerable obstacles for integration within the economic system of *ius patronatus*. Michael Baxandall has noted that towards the end of the fifteenth century, clauses in artists' contracts regarding the use of precious materials had diminished in importance as more emphasis was placed on skill and *ingegno*.[103] But heightened claims about the intellectual status of the visual arts that were promoted by the painters themselves and their humanist peers also undermined cost-based methods of production and valuation. With the dematerialization of the painted surface entailed by the Albertian *pala*, the appraisal of the beauty and worth of an altarpiece was no longer a straightforward calculation based on labour and materials, but increasingly rested on less tangible criteria such as the skill and reputation of the artist. This was not a simple substitution of one set of pictorial values for another: paintings made without precious materials and intricate detail, quite simply, cost less to make.

Painters and patrons alike were invested in maintaining the tacit economies of *ius patronatus*, which would be disturbed were altarpieces perceived to be severely diminished in value. In the second half of the fifteenth century, patrons began diverting funds from material

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[102] Condivi 1976, p. 58.

[103] Baxandall 1988, ch. 1, "Conditions of Trade."

to skill through contractual clauses, for example, specifying which parts were to be completed by the master rather than the workshop, or requesting high levels of pictorial detail.[104] Such formulations are explicit in Botticelli's contract of 1485 for the altarpiece for Giovanni d'Agnolo de' Bardi's chapel in S. Spirito in which nearly half of his payment of 75 florins was allocated "*per il suo pennello*," one of the few fifteenth-century contracts to make specific mention of an artist's skill.[105] Another strategy was to opt for well established painters who charged higher fees; this is especially true of provincial towns that sought the services of painters from major centres.[106] The deliberations among the Fabbrica of the cathedral of Orvieto regarding the choice of painter for the frescoes of the Cappella Nova are possibly the earliest to stipulate fame as a consideration in choosing an artist; in 1447 the committee ultimately settled on Fra Angelico, then employed by Pope Nicholas V, who, they remarked, was "famous beyond all other Italian painters."[107] Around the same time, St Antoninus, the Archbishop of Florence wrote in the *Summa Theologica* that "painters claim, more or less reasonably, to be paid the salary of their art not only by the amount of

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[104] Baxandall 1988, pp. 17ff. For *il suo mano* clauses, see O'Malley 1998; Spear 2002.

[105] Horne 1980, p. 353: "Fior. 75 d'oro in oro, paghati a Sandro di Botticello, a lui contanti: che fior. 2 sono per azurro, e fior. 38 per l'oro e mettitura della tavola, e fior. 35 per suo pennello." As O'Malley notes, it was one of the few contracts prior to the sixteenth century to mention skill, although the terms regarding payment for materials and framing were otherwise conventional; O'Malley 2005b, pp. 292-93, note 12. Indeed, the total price paid by Bardi for Botticelli's altarpiece (including framing) was low compared to what he commanded on other occasions, especially considering the quality and size of the altarpiece. Andrew Blume suggests that such a high profile commission may have been seen by Botticelli as a desirable trade-off for the lower fee; Blume 1995.

[106] O'Malley 2005b, pp. 151-59.

[107] Gilbert 1998, p. 405; cf. O'Malley 2005b, pp. 106-07.

work, but more in proportion to their application and greater expertness in the trade."[108] Although St Antoninus held comparatively conservative views on the practice of painting, as Creighton Gilbert points out, his cautiously phrased comments ("more or less reasonably") hint at the novelty of the painters' argument, which stands in sharp contrast with the cost-based pattern for most occupations.[109] As the century progressed, astute observers were inclined to think of renowned painters in terms of what were increasingly seen as *individual* – and, hence, inimitable – characteristics. In a well-known document dating to the 1490s, an agent of Lodovico Sforza, who was interested in hiring leading Florentine artists for the decorations of the Certosa di Pavia, reports his opinions on the works of Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, Perugino, and Ghirlandaio, taking pains to distinguish between their respective manners (*aria*).[110] But with traditional pricing schemes still largely intact for the majority of commissions, average prices for altarpieces nevertheless dropped in central Italy over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (with the exception of Venice in which altarpieces frequently took on monumental proportions).[111]

However, for a handful of painters the fees they commanded began to increase. Further contributing to the increased weight placed on intangible criteria of evaluation was

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[108] St Antoninus, *Summa Theologica* (Venice, 1477, written sometime between 1446 and 1459): "Pictores non solum secundum quantitatem laboris, sed magis secundum industriam et majorem peritiam artis, de salario suo artificii magis vel minus rationabiliter postulant sibi solvi;" quoted and translated in Gilbert 1959, p. 76.

[109] Gilbert 1959, pp. 76-89.

[110] Baxandall 1988, pp. 25-27.

[111] In addition to the changes in production that may have affected prices, O'Malley posits that increasing competition among painters, particularly in Florence, may have driven prices down, given that demand remained otherwise relatively stable; O'Malley 2003; O'Malley 2005b, ch. 6, "Trends in the Prices of Altarpieces."

the evolving conception of the artist as an inspired creator, an esteem that went beyond what Alberti could have foreseen when he first argued for the elevated status of the painter in the 1430s on more purely academic terms.[112] In the Ficinian ambience of late fifteenth-century Florence in particular, the understanding of the visual arts was invested with neoplatonic significance in which artists' *invenzioni* were understood as manifestations of divinely inspired ideas and processes of creating art were described using analogies to Divine Creation.[113] Such ideas soon enjoyed mainstream currency in Florence and beyond; the poet Ariosto, for example, famously dubbed Michelangelo "divine" in his 1516 poem, the *Orlando furioso*.[114] Although one must be cautious about how literally such metaphysical sentiments were intended, leading painters in artistic centres throughout Italy nevertheless were celebrated for their originality, skill, and individual manner or style, that is, what had come to be seen as a distinct but consistent approach to rendering their subject.

By the end of the century, Italy's preeminent artists had attracted an audience that extended beyond local viewers, a situation that only intensified demand for their works. Whereas painters with strong reputations had always been able to command higher fees, what had changed was that the proportion of costs such as material and labour in price calculations had diminished in relative terms. In her study of Italian altarpiece contracts, Michelle O'Malley has observed that beginning in the late fifteenth century, the portion of fees left over from quantifiable costs could be as high as seventy per cent for higher end altarpieces

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[112] On the increasing importance placed on such qualities as creativity and invention by the end of the fifteenth century, see for example, Battisti 1960, pp. 178ff; Panofsky 1968, pp. 47-71; Kemp 1977.

[113] Summers 1981, see, esp. ch. 4, "*Furia*," pp. 60-70; Kemp 1989, pp. 38ff.

[114] On the *topos* of the divine artist in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Kris and Kurz 1979, pp. 38-59; and Campbell 2002.

(i.e., over two hundred florins), further destabilizing cost-based methods of valuation.[115] These conditions would only intensify in the early years of the sixteenth century, as ultra-competitive demand and highly elastic prices meant that leading artists could command unprecedented fees that were demonstrably out of proportion with the cost of materials and manufacture.[116] However, in the period of transition towards the end of the fifteenth century, the situation was still considerably murkier, and saw painters and patrons faced with the more prosaic situation of reconciling these competing modes of valuation.

V. The Litigation Surrounding Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks*

In June 1478, the newly founded Confraterntiy of the Immaculate Conception acquired a chapel in the Franciscan church of S. Francesco Grande, one of Milan's most historic and sacred churches and immediately set about having it decorated.[117] They began with the upper walls, which featured a conventional repertory of images, including Seraphim in the cornices, symbols of the four Evangelists in the corner *tondi*, and an image of God the Father in the cupola.[118] Once the fresco decoration was completed, the Confraternity turned its attention to

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[115] O'Malley 2005b, pp.154-60.

[116] For "high end" fees paid to painters at the beginning of the sixteenth century, see Hatfield 2003. For general price trends, see O'Malley 2005b, ch. 6, "Trends in the Price of Altarpieces."

[117] The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception rose to new prominence under the Franciscan pope, Sixtus IV, who established a feast day in 1476 in an effort to quell the longstanding theological disputes between the Franciscan and the Dominican *maculists*, although he stopped short of declaring it dogma due to the continued debates about the precise nature of the doctrine. These events were especially resonant for the Milanese Franciscan community; the Milanese Franciscan, Bernardino de' Busti, had composed one of the two Divine Offices approved by Sixtus IV for the feast. For a general overview of the controversies surrounding the Immaculate Conception during the late fifteenth century, see Goffen 1986, pp. 74-79. On the Milanese involvement with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, see Snow-Smith 1987, pp. 37-38

[118] For the iconography of the frescoes, see Snow-Smith 1987.

the altarpiece, beginning with the commissioning of the frame, as per the usual practice for the manufacture of polyptychs. According to the earliest document of 8 April 1480, the sculptor Giacomo del Maino was commissioned to carve the frame according to a design produced in collaboration with the prior of the church and three members of the confraternity.[119] There is no visual record of the polyptych, which was dismantled with the suppression of the church in 1798; details provided in subsequent documents indicate it must have been a spectacular example of a Lombard *ancona*, composed of an elaborate multi-tiered architectonic framework with a profusion of relief and sculptural elements, including, a large sculpture of the Madonna (possibly in the round), figures of God the Father surrounded by angels, and relief panels likely depicting scenes from the Life of the Virgin.[120]

Once the frame was completed in late 1482 or early 1483, work began on the painted panels. A contract of 25 April 1483 stipulates that Leonardo and the de Predis brothers, Evangelista and Ambrogio, were to execute the central panel and flanking wings, respectively, all of which was to be completed by December of the same year for which they would be remunerated a total of eight hundred *lire* (or two hundred ducats) to be paid out in regular instalments.[121] In addition to the panels, the artists would undertake the gilding and polychromy of the entire framework and sculptural elements. It is important to remember that within such a multi-media complex, the painted panels would not have been accorded any particular importance. Thus in the itemized *lista*, which enumerates the manner in which

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[119] See Glasser 1977, doc. III.

[120] On the appearance of the polyptych, see Snow-Smith 1987, pp. 40-51.

[121] See Glasser 1977, doc. V.

the enframement and sculptural elements were to be painted and gilded, there were only two short clauses concerning iconography.[122] According to the scant details in the contract, the side panels were to each depict "four angels, one panel differentiated from the other (that is, in one panel they are to sing and in the other to play)."[123] These can be identified with the two panels of music-making angels both in the National Gallery in London (fig. 24), both presumably from the right flanking panel.[124] The instructions concerning the central panel, however, are even terser, simply stating that it was to depict the "Virgin and Child, and the angels done in oil with utmost care."[125]

In an important document recently discovered by Grazioso Sironi, a payment of 23 December 1484 confirms that the painting was mostly complete by that date.[126] However, sometime between 1491 and 1494 Leonardo and Ambrogio de Predis (Evangelista had died in 1490) submitted a petition against the confraternity requesting additional compensation for their expenses, which had exceeded the agreed-upon amount of their contract. They state that the "two works" (i.e., the enframement and the painted panels) were worth three hundred ducats, rather than the two hundred ducats specified in the original contract, which had

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[122] The *lista* is a type of *scripta*, that is a document that described subject matter that was appended to painting contracts. O'Malley 2005b, pp. 171-75.

[123] Glasser 1977, p. 331: "Item li quadri. vodi. sieno. angolli. iiii. per parte differentiati deluno quadro e laltro. videlicet. uno quadro che canteno et altro che soneno;" translated in Leonardo/Kemp 1989, p. 270.

[124] The angels do not correspond in number and subject with the specifications; however, discrepancies between the contract and final work were not uncommon during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; cf. Gilbert 1998; O'Malley 2005b, pp.191ff.

[125] Glasser 1977, p. 331: "Item. la tavolla de mezo facta. depenta in piano. la nostra dona. conlo suo fiollo eli angolli. facta aolio in tucta.perfectione;" translated in Leonardo/Kemp 1989, p. 270.

[126] Sironi and Shell 2000; Marani 2000, p. 125.

already gone into expenses for the frame. They further add that Leonardo's central panel alone, which had been estimated at twenty-five ducats, was rather worth one hundred ducats alone. Notably, this value was not determined by any calculation of their expenses, but rather by an unnamed, outside party who had offered that sum to buy the *Virgin of the Rocks*.

The matter remained unresolved, and on 23 June 1503 the appeal was again renewed.[127] With Leonardo residing in Florence, having left Milan following the French invasion in 1499, Ambrogio de Predis acted on behalf of both painters. This second complaint is essentially a reiteration of the first appeal. Again, a prospective buyer offering one hundred ducats is mentioned, again the artists request that the confraternity make a new appraisal, and again the confraternity rejected their claims, this time adding that their tactics – specifically their recourse to an outside buyer – were dishonest. This appeal went to Louis XII before being referred back to the Podestà of Milan, Charles d'Amboise. A settlement was not reached until 27 April 1506, at which time external arbiters were brought in to determine a fair price for the painters' work.[128] The confraternity finally agreed to add fifty ducats to the original amount – half the amount sought by the artists – so long as Leonardo returned to Milan to oversee the remaining work on the altarpiece.[129] The altarpiece was completed shortly thereafter, as indicated by the subsequent payments made to Ambrogio de Predis on 26 August 1507 and 23 October 1508.[130]

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[127] Glasser 1977, doc. VIII.

[128] Two arbiters, one for each party, were appointed on 4 April 1506. Glasser 1977, doc. X. On the same date, the confraternity (unsuccessfully) filed a protest against the decision. Glasser 1977, doc. XI.

[129] Glasser 1977, doc. XII.

[130] Glasser 1977, doc. XIII; Glasser 1977, doc. XIV.

The final set of documents concerns the production of a copy. In a document of 18 August 1508, the painters state that they have no further complaint with the confraternity, provided they be allowed to remove the painting from the ancona in order for a copy to be made.[131] A subsequent document provides further details: Ambrogio de Predis would undertake the copy at his own expense but under Leonardo's direction – a condition that seems to have been required by whoever requested the copy – with the proceeds of its sale to be divided between the artists.[132] Most scholars agree that the London painting was done with considerable work by de Predis, and it is possible that it is the copy made in 1508. Alternatively, the documents may refer to a lost third copy, with the Louvre panel already having been sold off during the contractual disputes and replaced with the National Gallery version.[133]

Much of the scholarship surrounding the *Virgin of the Rocks* has focused on trying to untangle the problem of the dual versions of the panel, and the concomitant questions regarding dating and authorship. Since the publication of the first core group of documents by Emilio Motta in 1893, countless explanations have been put forward, each purporting sound premises and clear deductive reasoning, yet each almost invariably pivoting around at least one crucial assumption that precludes any definitive resolution.[134] Each new discovery

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[131] Sironi 1981, doc. VII.

[132] Sironi 1981, doc. VIII.

[133] For the possible third version of the *Virgin of the Rocks*, see Gould 1981, p. 76; Marani 1991.

[134] For the early publication of the documents relating to the commission, see Motta 1893; Malaguzzi-Valeri 1901; Biscaro 1910; Beltrami 1919, all of which are transcribed in Glasser 1977. Since Glasser's comprehensive study, further documents have been published. See Sironi 1981; Sironi and Shell 2000. On the problem of the dual versions of the *Virgin of the Rocks* see, for example, Davies 1947; Castelfranco 1960; Davies 1961, pp. 261-81; Glasser 1977, pp. 208-70; Brown 1978; Gould

only seems to prompt new questions such that the circumstances behind the dual (or treble) versions of the altarpiece remain almost as elusive as they did almost a century ago. It will suffice to state here that the Louvre version was largely completed by 1484, while the National Gallery version was completed by 1508 and was executed in large part by Ambrogio de Predis. The provenance of the London *Virgin of the Rocks* can be traced directly to S. Francesco della Grande where it remained until 1783. The fate of the Louvre version, however, is less certain.[135] There are no further records of it until the late sixteenth century, when it was recorded in the French royal collection at Fontainebleau.[136]

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Conflicts between artists and patrons were not new. A process of cross-checking upon completion of the work, known as a *stima*, arose in the fourteenth century in order to ensure that both parties were satisfied that the terms of the contract had been met, that is, that the patron was satisfied with the quality and timely completion of the work and the artist was fairly recompensed.[137] This was usually undertaken by an agreed-upon third party, who

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1981; Cannell 1984; Marani 2000, pp. 128ff.

[135] The London *Virgin of the Rocks*, along with the side panels by the de Predis brothers, remained in the church of S. Francesco della Grande as late as 1783 when an anonymous guide mentions all three pictures in the church. The *Virgin of the Rocks* alone must have been transferred to the Hospital of S. Caterina alla Ruota shortly thereafter, and was sold to Gavin Hamilton in 1785. The side panels of the de Predis brothers likely remained in the church until it was secularized in 1798, at which time they were acquired by Conte Giacomo Melzi. Davies, 1961, p. 269-70.

[136] The painting was first recorded indirectly in a post-mortem inventory of a collection of copies after paintings at Fontainebleau belonging to Sébastian Zamet, the superintendent of the chateau from 1599. It is also listed in an informal *aide-memoire* of the "most rare" paintings of the Cabinet des Peintures at Fontainebleau by Rascas de Bagarris around 1608. It was subsequently mentioned in Cassiano dal Pozzo's diary of his trip to France in 1625; see Cox-Rearick 1995, pp. 101, 143.

[137] On the practice of *stime* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Krohn 2003; O'Malley 2005b, pp. 120-28. For Lombardy, in particular, see Schofield, Shell, and Sironi 1989, p. 27.

would assess the value of the work. By the end of the fifteenth century, the practice became an increasingly common part of the fulfilment of any contract in major Italian centres, even when there was no conflict. And by the sixteenth century the practice had developed to the point that regulatory bodies oversaw all *stime* in which only guild-appointed experts had the authority to evaluate works.

However, in the conflict regarding the *Virgin of the Rocks*, a *stima* was not undertaken until a late stage in the negotiations. Rather the confraternity outright dismissed the first appeal because, as explained in the second round of litigation, they considered the painters' claims to be fraudulent. The confraternity members were not entirely without cause. For even though the initial cause of the painters' complaint rested on their claims that the costs for material had exceeded the amount provided by the contract, their counterproposal was not based on a revised estimation of their expenses but rather on a discretionary value as determined by the prospective buyer. In effect, two conceptions of painting itself were in conflict: the old method whereby the panel was but one of many skill-based crafts and was priced according to size, materials, and labour; and the new way whereby it would be evaluated according to less tangible factors, here, an externally determined "market value" as determined by the artist's renown. Indeed, several anecdotes in Vasari's *Vite* indicate that similar conflicts arose during the fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries as artists resisted methods of pricing based on materials and labour. Donatello, he tells us, was so insulted when a patron balked at his fee for a bronze bust on the grounds that it had only taken a month to complete that he destroyed the sculpture before upbraiding the beleaguered

merchant for being "more used to bargaining for beans than for statues."[138] In a similar anecdote, Michelangelo more pragmatically doubled the price of his *Doni Tondo* when his patron dared to quibble over the original price of seventy ducats, a steep amount, but nevertheless still within the top range of payment schemes.[139] Even if we suspect Vasari's account was strictly rhetorical, as Nagel explains, such anecdotes nevertheless demonstrate that the "idea that art was not a measurable commodity" had gained broad traction among artists, though perhaps not among the people who commissioned art.[140]

To be sure, Leonardo and de Predis were not asking for an extravagant amount. But the fact that they made recourse to an ostensibly arbitrary price offered by the outside party suggests similar concerns about the status of the artist were at play. It is unlikely that they were motivated simply by profit, for in his own writings, Leonardo was critical of those who practised painting with a view simply to maximizing profit. He equated these painters with more traditional forms of representation, describing them as being "in thrall to the beauty of gold and azure."[141] These painters, he argues, had studied insufficiently and were little interested in – if not incapable of – creating true beauty, which arose from diligent study and invention, rather than material splendour. Worse still, they were selfishly disinclined to make good works unless they were generously compensated. For Leonardo, such profit-seeking motives were at odds with the painter's true vocation, which was to challenge himself to

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[138] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 369.

[139] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, p. 656.

[140] Nagel 2003, pp. 321.

[141] Leonardo/McMahon 1956, vol. 2, fol. 38r: "Glie una certa generatione di pittori li quail per loro poco studio bisogna che viveno sotto la bellezza del oro et d l'azzurro;" translated in Leonardo/Kemp 1989, p. 196.

create works that would bring him honour, regardless of any financial compensation.[142] Like the artists who Vasari alleges had rejected insufficient fees, Leonardo espoused an idea of painting as a fundamentally creative act, which takes its form in skilful invention that was entirely independent from any sort of quantifiable measure of worth.

Immediately prior to his departure for Milan, Leonardo had been working on the altarpiece of the *Adoration of the Magi* for the church of S. Donato a Scopeto (fig. 25).[143] The panel, which is only completed to the level of underpainting, was a highly experimental work in which Leonardo sought to move away from rigid, perspectivally determined space toward a more dynamic, but nevertheless tightly ordered composition. Unlike the *Adoration of the Magi*, however, the *Virgin of the Rocks* was not a *pala*. In Milan, like much of Italy, there were few, if any, examples of the *tavola quadrata*. Rather, Lombardy boasted some of the most massive and opulent polyptychs to be found anywhere on the Italian peninsula. Given what is known of the framework that housed it, it seems that he made few concessions to harmonizing his panel with the rest of the polyptych. Indeed, the *Virgin of the Rocks* is pictorially self-sufficient in a way that makes it all too easy to overlook the fact that it was once just one part of a complex polyptych. The novelty of Leonardo's composition and the ethereal naturalism achieved through his techniques were groundbreaking in any context, let alone an artistically conservative centre such as Milan.[144] In contrast to traditional, hieratic images of the Madonna Enthroned, Leonardo presents the Virgin in an emphatically natural

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[142] Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 194-96.

[143] Marani 2000, pp. 106-15.

[144] The literature on Leonardo's painting is vast. For the purposes of my argument, which focuses on the innovativeness of his naturalism, it will suffice to refer to Kemp 2006.

setting, seated on the ground, and without any overt attributes of her holiness. She rests her right hand on the infant John the Baptist, while the Christ child blesses him. A mysterious angel kneels on the right and gazes out at the viewer, while pointing toward the Baptist with his left hand. The *Virgin of the Rocks* owed much to contemporary private devotional images with its compact, intimate grouping and gentle interactions between figures, what Leonardo referred to in his writings as the "*moti mentali*" ("motions of the mind").[145] The background itself was just as unprecedented. Although landscape settings were not uncommon in altarpieces of the late fifteenth century, they typically maintained a rigorous perspective, often subjecting landscape elements to a rigid formality and extreme idealization. By contrast Leonardo created an inhospitable, craggy grotto punctuated by apertures into a distant mountainous landscape, the whole of which evokes a sense of otherworldliness in a way that a cultivated landscape and commensurable setting do not. This heightened representation of "nature" was translated into paint from Leonardo's own intensive studies of natural phenomena, a process that was made possible by his innovative use of oil paint. Leonardo tested the limits of what oil paint could do, creating a murkier, more naturalistic palette, fine and exact rendering of even the most delicate of details, and the suggestion of subtle atmospheric effects. Most striking is Leonardo's characteristic use of *sfumato* in the figures, where the imperceptible transitions between light and shade and between figure and ground tend to obscure any trace of the painter's hand, thereby imparting the holy scene with a sense of divinely wrought sacrality.[146]

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[145] Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 144-46.

[146] For Leonardo's use of *sfumato*, see Nagel 1993.

The undeniable unusualness of the Louvre *Virgin of the Rocks* has prompted speculation that the confraternity members may have had some misgivings about the first version of the painting, if not outright rejected it.[147] This hypothesis receives some support in the differences between the Louvre and National Gallery versions. In the later version, the figures are enlarged with respect to the landscape setting. The colour palette is sharpened with brightened, clearer hues and stronger, directional lighting. The figure of the angel is the most dramatically altered: his mysterious posture is more clearly resolved; the ambiguous pointing gesture is removed; and, his gaze is redirected from the viewer toward the infant John. Although the halos and staff resting against the shoulder of the Infant Baptist that appear in the later version are generally believed to have been added sometime much later, they nevertheless serve to underscore just how unconventional it was to have sacred figures without traditional signifiers of holiness, even for later audiences.[148]

The London version, however, still maintains the same deliberate abstruseness that continues to defy any clear resolution of its meaning. Given the circumstances of its commission, much scholarship has focused on its relation to the Immaculate Conception. Joanne Snow-Smith offers the most thoroughgoing reading of the painting's iconography to date in which she considers the *Virgin of the Rocks* in relation to the specific programme and beliefs of the Franciscan order, and contemporary debates about the nature of the Virgin's

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[147] Pietro Marani goes even further and suggests that the Franciscans' reluctance to accept the painting due to its iconographic unorthodoxy meant that they were willing to let the painting be sold off during the first round of negotiations with the understanding that a substitute altarpiece that would emend the problems of the first version would replace it; Marani 2000, pp. 137-38.

[148] Davies 1961, p. 161. Marani further points out that Cardinal Federico Borromeo's copy of the London *Virgin of the Rocks*, which presumably would have been faithful to the original, lacks these attributes; Marani 2000, pp. 139-40.

Immaculacy, in particular.[149] But the inclusiveness of Christian symbolism can also lead to over-determined interpretations; contemporary painters and viewers steeped in its visual culture might not have ascribed any special significance to what were otherwise commonplace motifs.[150] In particular, the assertive landscape setting, which was highly unorthodox especially when compared with the usual pastoral settings prevalent in paintings of the Madonna and Child, has been equated with any number of biblical caves.[151] Almost certainly Leonardo's grotto was iconographically motivated; however, theological interpretations can only go so far in explaining his radical experimentation with the painted medium. Patricia Emison rightly takes note of Leonardo's own expressed fascination with nature in its wild aspect, and suggests that untamed landscapes symbolized for him purity in opposition to man's corruption.[152] But curiously, Leonardo's own words on the subject of the painted "landscape" have not been considered with regard to the *Virgin of the Rocks*. In a passage on the *paragone* between painting and poetry entitled "How the painter is lord of every kind of person and of all things," Leonardo argues for the painter's ability to create vividly any subject he desires. However, in describing the painter's unlimited capacity for

[149] Snow-Smith 1983; Snow-Smith 1987.

[150] Cf. Farago 2003, pp. 57-58.

[151] Martin Kemp suggests that the rocky grotto was meant as an "exotic wildness suitable for John's mountain lair," and that, more likely, the cleaved rocks referred to a passage from the *Song of Songs*, a text he argues that was frequently consulted by the Immaculatists: "My dove in the clefts of rock, in the cavities of walls, reveal your countenance to me;" Kemp 2006, pp. 75-76. For Joanne Snow-Smith the rocks are inherently multi-valent, referring to the "caves" of Christ's Birth, Death, Descent in Limbo, and Resurrection. More specifically, she proposes that the rock formations simulate those on Mount Alverna and thus evoke St Francis, both as their patron saint, and as an *Alter Christus*; Snow-Smith 1983, pp. 139ff; Snow-Smith 1987. Timothy Verdon interprets the subject as representing Mary's premonition of the Passion, a common theme in the late fifteenth century, in which the caves refer to the sepulchre; Verdon 1986, p. 110.

[152] Emison 1993, pp. 117-18.

invention, he focuses on landscape almost exclusively. He writes:

> If the painter wishes to see beauties that would enrapture him, he is master of their production ... And if he wishes to produce places or deserts, or shady or cool spots in hot weather, he can depict them, and similarly warm places in cold weather. If he seeks valley, if he wants to disclose great expanses of countryside from the summits of high mountains, and if he subsequently wishes to see the horizon of the sea, he is lord of them, or if from low valleys he wishes to see high mountains, or from high mountains see low valleys. In fact, therefore, whatever there is in the universe through essence, presence, or imagination, he has it first in his mind and then in his hands.[153]

This passage is not without spiritual connotations that are germane to the meaning of the *Virgin of the Rocks*: in addition to overt analogies between Divine Creation and artistic invention, nature itself was thought to be infused with divinity down to its humblest specimen. But one must also take into account that the passage formed just one part of a litany of arguments in favour of painting, in which Leonardo's goals were decidedly worldly: to assert the painting's superiority over poetry, which had the advantage of an illustrious ancient pedigree, inclusion among the liberal arts, and an uncontested reign atop the imitative arts.[154] For Leonardo, painting's superiority over poetry was inherent in its appeal to vision, the most immediate and important of the senses, and its more direct relationship to works of

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[153] Leonardo/McMahon 1956, vol. 2, fol. 5r: "Se'l pittore vuol vedere bellezze che lo innamorino egli è signore di generarle … Et se vuol generare siti e deserti, lochi ombrosi o freschi ne tempi caldi li figura, e cosi lochi caldi ne tempi freddi, se vuol valli se vuole delle alte cime de monti scoprire gran campagne, et se vuole dopo quelle vedere l'orizzonte del mare egli ne signore et se delle basse valli vuol vedere li alti monti o delli alti monti le basse valli e spiaggie et in effetto ciò che nel universo per essentia, presentia, o imaginatione esso l'ha prima nella mente e poi nelle mani;" translated in Leonardo/Kemp 1989, p. 32.

[154] The relevant passages appear in Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 20-38 ("The Works of the Eye and Ear Compared"). See also the comparison between painting and sculpture ("The Difference between Painting and Sculpture") in Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 38-46. For a comprehensive examination of Leonardo's contribution to the *paragone* debate, see Farago 1992, esp. ch. 3 "Leonardo's Defence of Painting." For the tradition of the *paragone* in the sixteenth century, see Mendelsohn 1982; Farago 1992, ch. 2, "The Rivalry of the Arts in Leonardo's Time." For the significance of the passage in the development of the landscape genre, see Gombrich 1967b.

nature itself, unlike words, which were mere conventions of man.[155] And unlike sculpture, which Leonardo deemed intellectually inferior in both its processes and goals, it could render all things, including above all, nature.[156]

Picking up where Alberti had left off, Leonardo had become the most outspoken and articulate advocate for the superior status of painting by the end of the century. But whereas Alberti had appealed to classical sources and rational demonstrations of academic learning, Leonardo grounded his theory of painting on its mimetic relationship to the natural world.[157] This passionately argued statement on the powers of the painter to represent nature in all its aspects also constituted one of the earliest arguments for the painter's capacity for limitless invention, an idea that would be developed more fully in the sixteenth century with the influence of neoplatonic thought on art theory.[158] The painter not only possessed unmatched abilities to imitate nature, but also the imaginative capacity to create nature himself. As his first major public work brought to completion, the *Virgin of the Rocks* realized the potential of painting to be boundless and presents nature as a fantastic creation of the artist's imagination.

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Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* was a delicate synthesis of the religious image as object of devotion and the new conception of painting as an intellectual and creative endeavour. Unfortunately little is known about the contemporary response to it. The documents offer

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[155] Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 21-23.

[156] Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 40-41.

[157] Bialostocki 1988.

[158] Kemp 1977, pp. 370ff.

scant information about the painting itself and nothing further is known about the third-party buyer. Vasari mentions an altarpiece of a *Nativity* that was given by Duke Lodovico to the Emperor Maximilian (on the occasion of his marriage in 1493 to Lodovico's daughter, Bianca), which seems very likely to refer to the *Virgin of the Rocks* – a permissible inaccuracy for a painting he would not have seen – especially given that both subjects would have had a sheltered, rustic setting.[159] If Vasari's account is correct the painting likely would have arrived in France as a gift when Francis I married Maximilian's niece, Eleanora, in 1530.[160] Alternatively, it may have been acquired earlier on by Louis XII.[161] The French king was deeply impressed by the achievements of Italian painters and sculptors, as were many high-ranking French officials and ecclesiastics in the wake of the French invasions. His admiration for Leonardo, in particular, is recorded by the sixteenth-century biographer, Paolo Giovio, who reports in an anecdote (which was subsequently repeated and expanded in Vasari's *Lives*) that Louis XII sought to have the *Last Supper* mural at S. Maria delle Grazie brought back to France, but ultimately could not find a way to safely remove and transport the entire wall.[162] The story may be apocryphal, but it nevertheless testifies not only to the king's enthusiasm for Leonardo – who was finally enticed to come to France at the behest of Louis XII's successor, Francis I – but also to his desire to extract Milan's artistic treasures for his own use, even those that came from religious institutions.

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[159] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 631. A contemporary document records that the painting sent was a *Maestà*, which likewise does not accurately describe the *Virgin of the Rocks*, but nevertheless lends credence to Vasari's claims.

[160] Gould 1981, p. 76; Marani 2001, p. 138.

[161] Cf. Cannell 1984; Cox-Rearick 1995, p. 141.

[162] Giovio 1999, p. 235.

If the *Virgin of the Rocks* did go to France, it seems likely that it would have continued to function as an altarpiece. As a liturgical device, however, it would have been functionally diminished: not only would it be extricated from its own iconographically charged framing, it could not offer the same degree of specificity as an altarpiece that had its iconography custom-tailored to suit the devotional needs of its patron. The only reason for seeking to acquire a painting commissioned by someone else was because the painting itself was coveted. While the subject of the *Virgin of the Rocks* would have been general enough to cater to the devotional needs of most potential buyers, this new phenomenon of intervening in problematic commissions arose from the aesthetic response that some altarpieces elicited as well as the ability to imagine them in alternate contexts, independent from any site-specific accoutrements.[163] It comes as little surprise that the Louvre version of the *Virgin of the Rocks* was one of the earliest altarpieces to be absorbed into the newly founded Cabinet des Peintures at Fontainebleau, where it was seen by Cassiano dal Pozzo in 1625, hung alongside other masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance.[164]

As for the second version, late sixteenth-century guidebooks attest to the fact that the altarpiece installed in the church of S. Francesco della Grande was the object of public veneration. According to a 1598 manuscript by the notary, Giacomo Filippo Besta, the

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[163] Titian's *Assumption* and *St Peter Martyr* altarpieces both attracted prospective buyers when problems arose with the initial commissions: in the case of the former, resistance to Titian's treatment of the subject; and in the latter, insufficient payment. Both altarpieces ultimately went to their original patrons. Humfrey 1988, 406-07 However, in 1537, the 500 *scudi* price for a third altarpiece, Titian's *Annunciation*, was deemed too high by the nuns of S. Maria degli Angeli in Venice, who commissioned a new altarpiece from Pordenone instead. On the advice of Pietro Aretino, Titian shrewdly "gave" the altarpiece to the Empress Isabella of Spain, the consort of his patron, Charles V, who in turn rewarded Titian with an impressive sum of around 2000 *scudi*. Goffen 2002, p.305.

[164] Cox-Rearick 1995, p. 143.

altarpiece had been the subject of special devotions during a plague of 1576.[165] Even if the fulfilment of the contractual agreement was fraught with conflict, there was no apparent contradiction between these roles upon the installation of the completed polyptych in S. Francesco della Grande in Milan. In her discussion of the devotional context of the *Virgin of the Rocks*, Claire Farago concedes that there was a small audience of "collectors" who would have valued the painting as a work of art. Moreover, in the *Trattato dell'arte de la pittura* (Milan, 1584), Giovan Paolo Lomazzo's mentions that painters are frequently observed admiring it.[166] Farago characterizes this response as an unintended and unanticipated side-effect for what was conceived and understood as a deeply religious image, and is careful to point out that even for these viewers it would have retained its sacred potency.[167] Farago is correct to underscore the fact that how the painting was understood was contingent upon the viewer, but perhaps errs in marginalizing the "aesthetic" reception of the *Virgin of the Rocks*. This arises, in part, from the implicit assumption that separate venues existed where such "collectors" viewed and contemplated other works of art and precious objects. Quite the contrary, very few collections existed in the late fifteenth and even throughout most of the sixteenth century throughout Italy, especially in Milan. Yet there was a growing tendency among elite circles to view painting and sculpture in terms of the unique artistic personalities that created them. If there were few prospects for viewing art in private spaces, then such a tendency must have been exercised, to some degree, in the public realm.

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[165] Farago 2003, pp. 54-55.

[166] Lomazzo 1584, p. 171.

[167] Farago 2003, pp. 51-52.

Chapter 2. Altarpieces and Their Viewers

We are accustomed to discussing altarpieces in terms of their religious meaning in relation to the unique circumstances of their production; in doing so we implicitly privilege the viewership of their patrons – who are thus assumed to have contributed (in varying degrees) to the content of their altarpieces – while wider audiences, when acknowledged, are typically characterized as devotees. Yet the paucity of evidence about the actual use of many altarpieces opens the door for us to reconsider numerous texts that indicate that some altarpieces drew viewers mostly interested in their art. This chapter examines the ways in which churches had become crucial sites for discourses on art by the beginning of the sixteenth century, and, by consequence, the ways in which the works within them were subject to processes of aestheticization.

In Ernst Gombrich's essay, "The Leaven of Criticism in Renaissance Art," he argues that one of the facilitating conditions – if not defining characteristics – of the Renaissance was the "spirit of criticism." Gombrich specifically focuses on documentary sources that attest to artists' heightened anxiety over "mistakes" and, conversely, their desire to demonstrate their creativity and skill, all of which, he argues, presupposes the existence of a critical audience.[1] Gombrich claims that these concerns are realized foremost in the *dimostrazione*, that is, the self-conscious display of pictorial "problem solving" meant to be recognized among learned viewers for its ingenuity and innovation. Although Gombrich leaves aside the question of genre, the notion of *dimostrazione* is especially relevant for altarpieces, which were the very sort of public, high-profile works that would have served

[1] Gombrich 1976, p. 111.

this purpose. Ultimately, for Gombrich, *dimostrazioni* are to be understood as self-conscious efforts to advance art itself, a construct that has come under considerable scrutiny in recent decades.[2] However, in the next two chapters, I want to return to the idea of the *dimostrazione* not for what it may or may not tell us about the "Renaissance conception of artistic progress," as Gombrich put it, but for what it can tell us about the critical discourse among producers and viewers of public art. In this chapter, I will discuss the evidence concerning critical audiences for altarpieces; in the following chapter, I will turn to the altarpieces themselves.

I. Leonardo and Perugino at the Annunziata

Vasari's lengthy account of the contemporary response to Perugino's double-sided altarpiece for the high altar of SS. Annunziata in Florence creates a vivid impression of the sort of critical audience that pictorially ambitious altarpieces could draw.[3] Expectations ran high when it came to prestigious public projects, and the unveiling of this altarpiece, in particular, must have been an eagerly anticipated event, especially in the wake of the recent departures of Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo from the city. The Servite church, which housed what was arguably the city's most famous cult image, the miraculous *Annunciation*, was one of the most prominent in Florence, and Perugino, was among the most successful and well regarded painters in Italy. He was described in 1501 as "the finest master in Italy" (*il meglio maestro di Italia*) by no less a tastemaker than the papal banker, Agostino Chigi.[4]

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[2] Gombrich 1967a.

[3] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 593-94. For the significance of this important passage in the *Vite*, see Brown 1992; Franklin 2001, ch. 1, "Perugino and the Eclipse of Quattrocento Mannerism"; Nelson 2004; Paolucci 2004; O'Malley 2007.

[4] Nelson 1997, p. 87. For Chigi's patronage and influence, see Rowland 1986.

Perugino had taken over the commission from Filippino Lippi, who had left the work incomplete at the time of his death in 1504. The Servites agreed to pay Perugino 150 florins to finish the front panel of the *Deposition* (fig. 26), which had already been begun by Lippi, as well as to execute an *Assumption* (fig. 27) for the rear panel of the double-sided altarpiece and six subsidiary panels of individual saints that were to be inserted within the intercolumniations of the newly built classical frame (one each between the paired columns on both sides of the altarpiece as well as on either short end of the frame).[5] The *Deposition*, as completed by Perugino, closely followed Lippi's composition, which had been blocked out in underpaint.[6] The panel was evidently well received as indicated by its influence on subsequent treatments of the subject by Florentine painters.[7] For the *Assumption*, however, Perugino produced an accomplished rendition of his well-known *maniera devota*, with delicately rendered figures, largely undifferentiated in pose, physiognomy, and expression, and disposed in a placid and symmetrical arrangement. According to Vasari, the altarpiece

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[5] The *Deposition* had been begun by Filippino Lippi, sometime before 1503, at which time a second agreement was reached with the patron, Fra Zaccheria, to increase Lippi's fee from 150 to 200 florins. Lippi died soon after on 20 April 1504 – at which time he had been paid a total of 50 florins – leaving only the upper half of the painting complete. Work did not resume on the altarpiece until 5 August 1505, when Perugino agreed to finish Lippi's work as well as the rest of the panels. All the paintings were dismantled from their enframement in the wake of post-Tridentine reforms in order to make way for the sacrament tabernacle, which was moved from a side chapel to the high altar, leaving the framework intact to house the tabernacle. For the history of the commission and reconstruction of the altarpiece in its original form in the Annunziata, see Nelson 1997.

[6] Filippino Lippi only completed the three men on ladders; however, the rest of the composition would have already been completed as an underpainting and is confirmed by four smaller copies presumably executed within Filippino's workshop which record Lippi's composition for the altarpiece. The revisions introduced by Perugino occur in the figures in the lower half of the panel. The only major change is in the figure of Mary Magdalene who embraces the cross in the copies, but kneels in prayer in Perugino's version. For the relation between Perugino's altarpiece and the copies after Filippino, see Zambrano and Nelson 2004, no. 65, pp. 606-07.

[7] Franklin 2004.

was roundly denounced when it was unveiled in 1508 for being grievously formulaic, and worse, underachieving. He writes that Perugino's *Assumption* received "no little censure from all the new craftsmen, particularly because Pietro had availed himself of those figures that he had been wont to use in other pictures with which his friends twitted him, saying that he had taken no pains, and that he abandoned the good method of working, either through avarice or to save time … they kept assailing him bitterly with sonnets and open insults, whereupon, although now old, he departed from Florence and returned to Perugia."[8]

There are the usual suspicions about the accuracy of Vasari's account, which appeared almost half a century later, as well as the likely bias of such a retrospective assessment. His assertion that the *Assumption* had been intended for the front of the altarpiece, but was rather installed on the back due to its shortcomings, for example, is manifestly false.[9] However, artists did gather in churches to discuss and study the famous paintings and sculptures housed within them, a practice amply described by Vasari and attested to by countless extant drawings after works installed in churches.[10] Moreover, Perugino did reuse old cartoons for individual figures – as Neri di Bicci had done in his workshop – in order to maximize the

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[8] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 3, pp. 609: "Dicesi che quando detta opera si scoperse, fu da tutti i nuovi artefici assai biasimata, e particolarmente perché si era Pietro servito di quelle figure ch'altre volte era usato mettere in opera: dove tentandolo gl'amici suoi, dicevano che affaticato non s'era, e che aveva tralasciato il buon modo dell'operare, e per avarizia o per non perder tempo, era in corso in tale errore … coloro aspramente con sonetti e publiche vallanie lo saettavano. Onde egli, già Vecchio partitosi da Fiorenza e tornatosi a Perugia, condusse alcuni lavori;" translated in Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 594.

[9] Vasari/DeVere, vol. 1, p. 593; cf. Nelson 1997, p. 85.

[10] For example, Vasari cites virtually every prominent Florentine painter among those who had studied after Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel at S. Maria del Carmine, and discusses the chapel again as the setting where Perino del Vaga, upon seeing the frescoes, boastfully announced to his colleagues that he could equal if not better any figure in the frescoes if only there were room for him to make one for comparison nearby. Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 323; vol. 2, pp. 165-66.

productivity of his busy studio.[11] Differences between the altarpiece at the Annunziata and Perugino's *Assumption* for the high altar at the church of S. Maria at Vallombrosa (fig. 28), which had been completed in 1500 – itself closely derived from his *Ascension* for S. Pietro in Perugia of 1498 – are mostly limited to iconography.[12] The comparatively modest sum paid to Perugino for his work for the Servites may have played into his decision to reuse previous designs.[13] Vasari's claims regarding the hostile reception of Perugino's altarpiece are corroborated by the earlier accounts of Paolo Giovio and Antonio Billi, both of whom wrote knowledgeably about Florentine art and artists.[14] Billi, whose family maintained a chapel in the Annuziata, would have known the altarpiece well – he described it simply as "*molto male*."[15] Indeed, in the context of early sixteenth-century Florence, the conservatism of Perugino's *Assumption* must have been especially conspicuous – and censurable – when compared to the recent achievements of Michelangelo and Leonardo that could be seen

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[11] On Perugino's reuse of cartoons in his practice, see Gardner von Teuffel 1995; Mencarelli 1997; Hiller von Gaertringen 1998; Hiller von Gaertringen 2004; and, most recently, O'Malley 2007.

[12] For the Vallombrosa altarpiece, see Teuffel 1995. Both the *Ascension* and Vallombrosa altarpieces would have been in Perugino's shop at the same time: the former was commissioned in 1495 and delivered in 1499; while the latter was commissioned in 1497 and delivered in 1500. For the relation between the three altarpieces, as well as other works in the same "family" dating from the same period, see Hiller von Gaertringen 1998; O'Malley 2007, pp. 676-81.

[13] By contrast, Perugino commanded substantially more robust fees for the *Ascension* and Vallombrosa altarpieces (500 florins and 300 florins, respectively). His fees for the Annunziata were equivalent to the Servite's previous agreement with Lippi (accounting for work that had already been completed). Perugino may have calculated that the altarpiece would still be profitable since it could be produced expeditiously and cost-effectively using existing cartoons. O'Malley 2007, pp. 682-90.

[14] Giovio 1999, pp. 203-05; Von Fabrizcy 1891, p. 329. Giovio wrote biographies of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael sometime between 1523 and 1527, and later encouraged Vasari to undertake writing the *Vite*. Billi's more extensive notes on the lives and works of Florentine artists was compiled between 1516 and 1535.

[15] Von Fabrizcy 1891, p. 329.

around Florence, most notably, in the cartoons for the ill-fated battle scenes for the Palazzo della Signoria, which were characterized by dynamic and imaginative compositions teeming with robust and energized figures.[16]

Vasari, as can be expected, had a further agenda. As the final biography of the *seconda età*, the Life of Perugino plays a pivotal role in the structure of the *Vite* that serves to underscore the conceptual gulf with the *terza età* that immediately followed.[17] In this context, his account of the critical rejection of the *Assumption* was emblematic of the failings of fifteenth-century painters in their preference for a static and placid style, over-reliance on formulaic figure types, and seeming indifference to innovation. Worse still, Vasari argued, Perugino had squandered his success by relying on past formulas due to a combination of laziness and greed, stagnating in a style that had become demonstrably *retardataire*, at least in Florence. His fall from grace thus also provides a cautionary tale of the potential pitfalls of success, in which the comforts of hard-won prosperity can sap ambition and breed complacency.[18]

Perugino's reaction, as told by Vasari, however, is unintentionally ambiguous. Perugino allegedly responded with incredulity, arguing back to his critics that he "had used the figures that you have at other times praised, and which have given you infinite pleasure; if

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[16] Later on in the century, Vasari would describe Michelangelo's cartoon for the Battle of Cascina, on display at the Sala del Papa, and later the Medici Palace, as a veritable school for painters; Vasari/DeVere, vol. 2, pp. 657-58. On the reception of the cartoons for the Palazzo della Signoria amonb Florentine artists, see Bambach 1999, p. 251.

[17] Ladis 1998; Franklin 2001, pp. 14-15; Nelson 2004.

[18] These comments are echoed in Vasari's introductory remarks that preface the Life of Perugino. Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 3, p. 595: "E per adventura tanto gli arebbe la ricchezza chiuso il camino da venire eccellente per la virtù quanto glielo aperse la povertà e ve lo spronò il bisogno."

now they do not please you, and you do not praise them, what can I do?"[19] No doubt Perugino's sheer inability (or stubborn refusal) to comprehend the nature of his errors was devised by Vasari to reveal his shortcomings as an artist. But Perugino's remarks can be taken another way in which his conservatism was less a matter of his disregard for innovation, as Vasari would have it, than it was of his adherence to a system of patronage that valued the authority of established models, a system that was still relevant throughout the sixteenth century. David Franklin's reassessment of Florentine art in the wake of the departures of Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo stresses that followers of Perugino, and other artistically "conservative" painters, in fact, enjoyed continued success in Florence long after Perugino's alleged disgrace.[20] Indeed, there was little reason for Perugino to have anticipated such a negative reaction. He provided his patrons at the Annunziata with an established commodity and assured quality according to the terms laid out in the contract; the Servites must have been satisfied, for the panels were installed as planned.[21] Similarly, there is no evidence that Perugino's reputation in Florence was ruined as Vasari claimed since he maintained a workshop there until 1511.[22] Rather the criticisms of Perugino's altarpiece originated among the unofficial audiences of artists and intellectuals that such a high-profile public project had drawn: for them the *Assumption* had failed as a *dimostrazione*. Thus, the

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[19] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 3, pp. 609-10: "Ai quali Pietro rispondeva: 'Io ho messo in opera le figure altre volte lodate da voi e che vi sono infinitamente piaciute: se ora vi dispiacciono e non le lodate, che ne posso io?"; translated in Vasari/DeVere, vol. 1, p. 594.

[20] Franklin 2001, esp. ch. 6, "Ridolfo Ghirlandaio and the Retrospective Tradition in Painting."

[21] The Servites of the Annunziata were not averse to registering their dissatisfaction with an artist's work; shortly afterward they would ask Andrea del Sarto to repaint Rosso's *Assumption* fresco in the Chiostro dei Voti. O'Malley 2007, p. 674.

[22] Franklin 2004, p. 70.

crux of Perugino's problems at the Annunziata lay in the disparity between the conservatism favoured by his patrons and the originality valued by critical viewers, such as Antonio Billi.

Perugino's foil at the Annunziata – as in Vasari's *Vite* – was Leonardo, who had returned to Florence in the wake of the French invasion of Milan and settled into living quarters at the Annunziata. According to Vasari, Filippino Lippi had deferentially handed over the prestigious commission for the high altarpiece of the church to the returning painter (the same project that would eventually pass to Perugino).[23] Vasari goes on to explain that nothing ever came of the project, adding that Leonardo produced instead a cartoon of the *Virgin and Child with St Anne* that he displayed for public viewing on the grounds of the Annunziata sometime around Easter of 1501. Although Vasari's claims regarding Lippi's offer are likely apocryphal, it is tempting to think that Leonardo's experiences with the confraternity of Milan may have soured him on the idea of having to submit to the more restrictive demands of church patrons.[24] Indeed, while Leonardo busied himself making private devotional paintings and portraits for Florence's elite, he was never to paint another altarpiece for the rest of his career. In any case, it seems that such an exhibition of the now-lost drawing did, in fact, take place, as confirmed by the contemporaneous account of Isabella d'Este's art agent, Fra Pietro da Novellara, as discussed below.

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[23] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 635.

[24] Following Vasari's remarks regarding Leonardo's involvement with the Annunziata altarpiece, some scholars have argued that the *St Anne* cartoon may have been made for the commission. See for example, Hartt 1986, p. 12. However, more recent scholarship dismisses any relation between the cartoon and the altarpiece, due in large part to the fact that the cartoon depicts a different subject than either of the completed paintings; Nelson 1997, p. 87; Bambach 2005; Kemp 2006, p. 214.

The purpose of the cartoon remains unknown; its subject does not correspond to either of the front or rear panels of the high altarpiece, nor does it relate to any other known commissions that were undertaken in Florence around the time. The precise nature of Leonardo's arrangement with the Servites similarly remains uncertain. Among various explanations put forth regarding the purpose of the cartoon, Martin Kemp plausibly suggests that the drawing primarily functioned as a *dimostrazione* in an effort to re-establish Leonardo's reputation among Florence's burgeoning ranks of painters, which would have been on less secure grounds after a nearly twenty-year absence from the city.[25] Whether or not the drawing was attached to a specific project, it is nevertheless certain that while at the Annunziata, Leonardo would have found himself in the midst of a veritable hothouse of ambitious patrons, famed artists, and high-profile commissions, all of which was prompted by the completion of the massive Gonzaga-funded renovation of the choir during the late fifteenth century, a situation Leonardo seems to have used to his advantage.[26] It was not uncommon for artists to receive visitors to view works-in-progress in order to receive constructive criticism; the practice, which had ancient precedents, was advocated in Alberti's *De pictura*.[27] Outside of artists' studios, with the increased importance placed on *disegno* in the creative process, more sophisticated viewers regarded finished drawings as purer

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[25] Kemp 2006, p. 217. Cf. Bambach 2005, p. 38. Alison Wright describes the practice of artists advertising their talents through finished drawings in her discussion of Antonio del Pollaiuolo's workshop. Wright 2003, pp. 226-27.

[26] There is no evidence that Leonardo was ever employed by the Servites for any works at the Annunziata. Nor is it clear what was the precise nature or the extent of his ties to the conventual community where he resided. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that Leonardo stayed at the Annunziata simply as a border, a practice not uncommon among visiting artists. On Leonardo at the Annunziata, see, most recently, Bambach 2005.

[27] Book III, ch. 62, in Alberti/Grayson 1972, p. 105.

instantiations of the artist's idea.[28] Nevertheless, such a staged viewing of a drawing to a public audience seems to have been virtually unprecedented: the event was just as much a product of the critical discourse that had proved to be Perugino's undoing.

Leonardo's composition is generally believed to have been recorded in two paintings attributed to Andrea del Brescianino, both presumed to be accurate copies after the lost cartoon (fig. 29). Leonardo's treatment of the subject was nothing short of revolutionary, eschewing the hieratic arrangement of figures exemplified in Masaccio's authoritative *St Anne Metterza* altarpiece (fig. 30), which had been installed in a chapel at the Florentine church of S. Ambrogio in 1424. Rather, the more naturalistic and intimate poses of the *St Anne* cartoon create a palpable sense of emotional connection between the figures, who are assembled within a tightly composed, pyramidal arrangement. In more general terms, the subject seems to have been an ideal vehicle for Leonardo to explore his ongoing preoccupation with creating organic, compact groupings that could also convey narrative meanings through the interrelationships between the figures; he returned to this theme throughout his career as evidenced by similar compositions such as the *Burlington Cartoon* and the Louvre *Virgin and Child with St Anne*, along with a number of related drawings.[29]

The interest that this lost cartoon has generated among art historians arises in large part from the tantalizingly perceptive eye-witness report by Fra Pietro da Novellara in a letter to Isabella d'Este dated 3 April 1501. Leonardo had already provided the eager Marchessa, the sister-in-law of his former patron, Lodovico Il Moro, with a drawn portrait, which had

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[28] Bambach 1999, ch. 6, "The Ideal of the '*Ben Finito Cartone*' in the Cinquecento."

[29] For other drawings and sketches related to the theme of the Virgin and Child with St Anne, see Aronberg 1951; Budny 1983; Nathan 1992.

since been given away by her husband. But she was still keen to acquire a replacement for it as well as a painting for her *studiolo*, for which she planned to assemble a series of mythological paintings commissioned from the most famed artists of the day. To this end, she employed Novellara to keep her apprised of Leonardo's activities Florence. He writes:

> Since he came to Florence he has done only the drawing of a cartoon. He is portraying a Christ Child of about one year, who is almost slipping out of his Mother's arms to take hold of a lamb which then he appears to embrace. His Mother, half rising from the lap of St Anne, takes hold of the Child to separate him from the little lamb (a sacrificial animal) signifying the Passion. St Anne, rising slightly from her sitting position, appears to want to her daughter from separating the Child from the lamb. She is perhaps intended to represent the Church, which would not have the Passion of Christ impeded.[30]

As head of the Carmelite Order in Mantua, Novellara was sensitive to the liturgical message of the work and begins with a careful interpretation of the drawing's subject and meaning.[31] For this viewer, the religious message of the drawing was a matter of course. But, significantly, in Novellara's description of the painting, meaning arises from the suggestion of narrative, rather than overt symbolism, in which the interactions between the figures subtly foreshadow Christ's sacrifice.[32] The pictorial novelty of the *St Anne* cartoon was not lost on the friar. Demonstrating his acuity in matters of painting, he continues by describing the composition of the drawing: "these figures are all life-sized but can fit into a small cartoon

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[30] Pietro da Novellara to Isabella d'Este, 1 April 1501: "[Leonardo] a facto solo dopoi chè ad firenze uno schizzo in uno cartone finge uno christo bambino de età cerca uno anno che usiendo quasi de bracci ad la mamma piglia uno agnello et pare che lo stringa. La mamma quasi levandose de grembo ad Sta. Anna piglia el bambino per spicarlo dallo agnellino ... Sta. Anna alquanto levandose da sedere pare che voglia retenere la figliola che non spicca el bambino dallo agnellino;" quoted in Nathan 1992, p. 97, note 3; translated in Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 271-73.

[31] For a brief summary of Novellara's career, see Nathan 1992, p. 97, note 2.

[32] Cf. Land 1994, pp. 122-27.

because they are either seated or bending over and each one is positioned a little in front of the other."[33] In pointing to the dense arrangement of figures and their interlocking poses, Novellara perceptively seized upon the essential nature of Leonardo's innovation.

Novellara's account is further elaborated by Vasari, who described the drawing nearly half a century later in what is one of the lengthier passages in his Life of Leonardo. He writes:

> In the face of that Madonna was seen whatever of the simple and the beautiful can by simplicity and beauty confer grace on a picture of the Mother of Christ, since he wished to show that modesty and that humility which are looked for in an image of the Virgin, supremely content with gladness at seeing the beauty of her Son, whom she was holding with tenderness in her lap, while with the most chastened gaze she was looking down at St John, as a little boy, who was playing with a lamb, not without a smile from St Anne, who overflowing with joy, was beholding her earthly progeny become divine – ideas truly worthy of the brain and genius of Leonardo.[34]

Vasari apparently confused the image with another version of the subject, as no figure of St John is mentioned in Novellara's letter, nor appears in the presumed copies of the painting.[35] In any case, such iconographical details matter much less in Vasari's account for he is little interested in the sort of theological message that Novellara had attributed to the

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[33] Pietro da Novellara to Isabella d'Este, 1 April 1501: "Et sono queste figure grande al naturale ma stanno in piccolo cartone perché tutte o sedono o stanno curve et una stae alquanto dinanzi ad l'altra verso la man sinistra;" quoted in Nathan 1992, p. 97, note 3; translated in Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 271-73.

[34] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 4, pp. 29-30: "Si vedeva nel viso di quella Nostra Donna tutto quello che di semplice e di bello può con semplicità e bellezza dare grazie a una madre di Cristo, volendo mostrare quella modestia e quella umiltà, ch'è in una Vergine contentissima d'allegrezza del vedere la bellezza del suo figliuolo che con tenerezza sosteneva in grembo, e mentre che ella, con onestissima guardatura, abasso scorgeva un S. Giovanni piccol fanicullo che si andava trastullando con un pecorino, non senza un ghigno d'una S. Anna che, colma di letizia, vedeva la sua progenie terrena esser divenuta celeste; considerazioni veramente dallo intelletto et ingegno di Lionardo;" translated in Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 635.

[35] Cf. Kemp 2006, p. 214.

image, focusing instead on Leonardo's rendering of emotions and characterizing the image as a scene of maternal love. But more than that, Vasari ultimately ascribes its beauty not to its subject, but to its maker, as a testament to Leonardo's achievements as a painter.

Significantly, he adds further information, claiming that the drawing had been put on display in a room on the grounds of the Annunziata, a detail omitted by Novellara. But it is the terms in which Vasari describes the event itself that merit further consideration. He writes that the cartoon "not only caused all the craftsmen to marvel but, when it was finished, men and women, young and old, continued for two days to flock for a sight of it to the room where it was, as if to a solemn festival, in order to gaze at the marvels of Leonardo, which caused all those people to be amazed."[36] Vasari describes the viewers' reactions in terms clearly meant to evoke the fervid response provoked by cult images. However, in borrowing the imagery of religious veneration, he implicitly demarcates a clear distinction between the cult image and the work of art: the simile gains its efficacy because it is different from that which it describes. But more important, there are striking parallels to Leonardo's own discussion of cult images in his writings on painting, which would have been known to Vasari. In a passage of the *paragone* devoted to the superiority of painting as a visual medium, Leonardo writes:

> Do we not see pictures representing the divine beings constantly kept under coverlets of the greatest price? And whenever they are unveiled there is first great ecclesiastical solemnity with much hymn singing, and then at the moment of unveiling the great multitude of people who have gathered there immediately throw themselves to the ground, worshipping and praying to the deity, who is represented in

[36] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 29: "La quale non pure fece maravigliare tutti gl'artefici, ma finita ch'ella fu, nella stanza durarono due giorni d'andare a vederla gl'uomini e le donne, i giovani et i vecchi, come si va a le feste solenni, per veder le maraviglie di Lionardo, che fecero stupire tutto qual popolo;" translated in Vasari/DeVere1996, vol. 1, p. 635.

> the picture, for the repairing of their lost health and for their eternal salvation, exactly as if this goddess were there as a living presence.[37]

Leonardo's remarks about the sacrality of sacred images tend to be understood as expressing a greater sense of religious belief than Vasari's more aestheticizing perspective, and have even been marshalled as evidence that Leonardo's *St Anne* cartoon did function as a cult image of sorts (in which case Vasari's account would be literally accurate despite the explicit use of simile).[38] Yet Leonardo makes essentially the same type of analogy as did Vasari in that he uses the example of cult images in order to underline the potency of the painted image within the polemical context of the *paragone*. As we saw in the previous chapter, Leonardo used the example of landscape to illustrate painting's limitless representational and creative possibilities. Here, the power of images to compel people to irrational actions – in the case of cult images, to undertake "inessential" and "dangerous" pilgrimages – was yet another argument in Leonardo's considerable arsenal in proclaiming the superiority of painting over poetry, and served to demonstrate the primacy of sight over the word, as discussed in the previous chapter.[39] That is to say, Leonardo makes recourse to the devotional response to cult images precisely because it was a compelling example that forcefully demonstrated his

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[37] Leonardo/McMahon 1956, vol. 2, fols. 3r-4v: "Hor non si vede le pitture rapressentatrici delle divine deità essere al continuo tenute coperte con copriture di grandissimi prezzi e quando si scoprano prima si fa grande solennita ecclesiastiche de vari canti con diversi suoni e nello scoprire la gran moltitudine de populi che quivi concorrono immediate se gittano a terra quella adorando e pregando per cui tale pittura è figurata del acquisto della perduta sanita e della etterna salute non altramente che se tale Iddea fusse il presente in vita;" translated in Leonardo/Kemp 1989, p. 20.

[38] Maniura 2000, pp. 194-95. Leonardo's scientific explorations were consonant with a belief in a prime mover, but aside from a handful of short comments attesting to his faith in God, Leonardo was not given to expound on his religious beliefs. For Leonardo's spirituality, see *Leonardo da Vinci* 2011, p. 162.

[39] For a summary of Leonardo's arguments for painting's superiority over poetry, see Farago 1992, ch. 3, "Leonardo's Defence of Painting."

claims. Leonardo was otherwise little concerned with what pilgrimage images looked like aside from their ability to provoke strong reactions. Indeed, no matter how much one allows for the sincere piety of Leonardo and his contemporaries, the very fact of putting an unfinished drawing on display is only conceivable when there is interest in its "art."[40] But there is another implication: to insist exclusively on the sacred function of the *St Anne* cartoon is to wrongly infer that there were alternative, secular venues for displaying, viewing, and discussing works of art.

II. An Excursus on Early Art Collecting

Our understanding of the critical audiences of sacred art must also be considered in relation to secular contexts. Perhaps the most important practical consequence of the increased weight that was being placed on invention and individual style in the public sphere was the emergence of art collecting, that is, the intentional accumulation of paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings in quantities beyond that required to fulfil functional purposes.[41] Art collecting emerged in the late fifteenth century from the confluence of circumstances that remain nearly impossible for us to disentangle today: in the most basic terms, collections could serve as proof of nobility, displays of ancestry and other forms of symbolic capital, as

[40] By comparison, Alexander Nagel discusses the highly finished presentation drawing of the *Pietà* given by Michelangelo to Vittoria Colonna within the context of reform-minded circles. He argues that the drawing was a meditated exploration of drawing as an alternative medium for religious art, one that was removed from the conventions and economies of a finished panel painting. But as, Nagel further argues, in the 1540s, this effort to reform religious art was ultimately too subtle and limiting to have any impact beyond a sophisticated elite; Nagel 1997.

[41] Scholarship on early modern collecting has expanded dramatically in recent years. See, for example, Alsop 1982; Anderson 1988; Pomian 1990; Goldthwaite 1993, pp. 149-255; De Benedictis 1998; Findlen 1998; Fantoni, Matthew, and Matthews-Grieco 2003; Aikema, Lauber, and Seidel 2005. There have also been numerous studies of individual collectors, some of which will be discussed further on in this study.

economically sound investments, and as demonstrations of taste and discernment. Paintings were among the new categories of objects desirable not for their intrinsic material worth, but for their intellectual and cultural value.[42] But it is important to remember that until the end of the sixteenth century, painting was not necessarily privileged over other collectible items. Compared to amounts spent on other forms of furnishing and decoration, paintings, even those by the most renowned artists of the day, were usually comparatively modest purchases.

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Since the late fourteenth century, the interior spaces of wealthy Italian households began to fill up with all manner of furnishings and luxury objects. With the waning of the influence of mendicant values and the relative political stability established within the communes, private spending was on the rise, especially in more prosperous and well developed parts of Italy.[43] Over the course of the fifteenth century, the task got underway of outfitting the substantially larger palaces that were being built with a vast array of decorative objects, curiosities, wall hangings, and an increasing number of paintings.[44] These paintings filled ostensibly functional roles: as devotional images that could be found in almost any room of the residence;[45] as portrait displays in public halls of family members, ancestors, and historical

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[42] The best sources for the motivations of Renaissance collectors are Pomian 1990; Goldthwaite 1993; and Campbell 2004, ch. 1,"The Study, the Collection, and the Renaissance Self."

[43] For the onset of materialistic values during the fourteenth century, see Goldthwaite 1987; Findlen 1998.

[44] For the decoration of Renaissance interiors, see Wackernagel 1981, pp. 146-77; Lydecker 1987; Thornton 1991; Goldthwaite 1993, pp. 212-43; *At Home in Renaissance Italy* 2006.

[45] For domestic sacred art, see Musacchio 2000; Mattox 2006; Morse 2007.

and contemporary personages;[46] as intellectual conceits in private studies;[47] and, as religious and moralizing images for private chambers that were often incorporated into the furnishings themselves.[48]

Even from an early date, however, paintings were acquired in numbers that exceeded strictly practical needs, suggesting that other motives were at play.[49] Nevertheless, findings gathered from the burgeoning research into early collecting indicate that there were, in fact, very few proper painting collections before the latter half of the sixteenth century. Rather the importance accorded to a handful of famous, secular-themed paintings (remarkable for their novelty to be sure) along with their forward-thinking owners has often led to misleading generalizations about the actual pervasiveness of both non-religious painting and picture collecting in early-modern Italy. Even a cursory review of scholarship on the period reveals that almost any individual owning paintings – particularly if these include works by a well-known artist – is commonly referred to as a collector, their habits of acquisition as collecting, and their holdings as collections, even when there is otherwise little else to indicate their interest in art as such. We should instead exercise caution in the way we characterize owners of paintings so as not to confuse mere possession with collecting, a caveat also issued by

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[46] Although much has been written about the origins and "meaning" of portraiture in the Renaissance, much less is known about the way portraits were used in domestic spaces. In Vasari's Life of Giovanni Bellini, for example, he noted the fashion in Venice for decorating their palaces with portrait displays of their ancestors; Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 494-95. For portrait collections, see Klinger Aleci 1998. On portraits of *uomini illustri*, in particular, see Joost-Gaugier 1976; Pavoni 1985.

[47] The literature on the Renaissance *studiolo* is vast. See esp. Thornton 1997, and more recently, Ruvoldt 2006.

[48] On the Renaissance *spalliera*, see Pope-Hennessy and Christiansen 1980; Barriault 1994.

[49] Goldthwaite 1993, pp. 243ff.

Krzysztof Pomian in his insightful study of seventeenth-century Venetian collections. He skirts the issue of distinguishing between the two, however, limiting his comments to the self-evident (but not entirely accurate) criterion that whereas the former is simply a matter of "covering blank walls," the latter requires that "walls are specifically built" (i.e., a gallery) to display paintings in a manner that draws attention to the paintings themselves, before ultimately conceding that the boundary between the two is often blurred. If the distinction is ambiguous in the seventeenth century, it is doubly true for earlier periods before galleries even existed.[50]

Still the desire to own paintings of any type – particularly if they were the work of famed painters or sculptors – was nevertheless evident by the turn the century. For example, in 1475, the Florentine merchant Giovanni Rucellai boasted of owning many works "by the hands of the best masters there have been, for some time up to now," and correspondingly recorded them in his inventory by artist rather than subject, a highly unusual method for the time that indicates a clear shift in priorities.[51] Lorenzo il Magnifico's well-known post-mortem inventory of 1492 is a benchmark attesting to the extent to which pictures (along with almost any other type of collectible object) were accumulated in private residences.[52] While around the same time, humanists such as Cristoforo Landino in Florence and Bartolomeo Facio compiled biographies of local and internationally known painters, sculptors, and architects – itself a consequence of the increased status attributed to the visual

[50] Pomian 1990, pp. 106-07.

[51] Gilbert 1998, p. 411.

[52] The inventory is most recently transcribed in Spallanzani and Gaetà Bertela 1992.

arts – that evinced a sophisticated understanding of artistic practice.[53]

The remarkable body of correspondence of Isabella d'Este, who was as famously precocious in her tastes as she was determined in her pursuits as a patron and collector, gives insight into these shifts in attitudes about art.[54] Her protracted correspondence with Giovanni Bellini in the years around 1500 regarding her desire to have him paint a "pagan fantasy" for her famed *studiolo* has become the *locus classicus* for the changing dynamic between artists and patrons during the Renaissance.[55] The conflict – which arose from d'Este's intractable desire to procure a mythological *istoria* in strict accordance with the learned programme devised by her advisor and Bellini's equally intractable refusal to submit to her terms – would have been unthinkable in an earlier era. Heeding the guidance of her liaison, Pietro Bembo who advised that she accommodate "the fantasy of him who has to paint it ... accustomed as he is to roam at will in his paintings," she acquiesced to Bellini's demands, and settled for a *Nativity* in lieu of the mythological *istoria* she desired from him.[56] Even though she intended to hang the religious scene in her bedroom rather than her *studiolo* as originally planned, surely Isabella's willingness to accept a substitute suggests that the particular subject of the

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[53] For Landino, see Baxandall 1988, pp. 115-53; for Facio, see Baxandall 1964.

[54] For Isabella's correspondence, see Brown 1982. Research on Isabella has grown exponentially in recent years, including major exhibitions, collections of essays, and monographs. See, for example, *La prima donna del mondo* 1994; *Isabella d'Este* 1995; Bini 2001; Campbell 2004.

[55] For an annotated list of the correspondence, which dates from 5 March 1501 to 1 January 1506, see Fletcher 1971. For a discussion of the implications of the dispute between Bellini and Isabella for patron-artist relations, see Gilbert 1998, pp. 27ff.; Goffen 2002, pp. 11-20; Nagel 2003, p. 339.

[56] Bembo's remarks echo those of Isabella's father-in-law, Federigo Gonzaga, who in 1480 had discouraged a request to have Mantegna execute a painting based on drawings to be supplied to the artist, commenting that it is "generally these excellent masters have their notions (*hanno del fantastico*) and it is well to take from them what one can have;" quoted in Gilbert 1998, p. 421.

painting was ultimately of less importance to her than the artist who made it.[57]

If Isabella d'Este's activities as a collector were atypical at that time, knowledge of key precepts of painting and familiarity with local artists nevertheless had become *de rigueur* among elite circles. The ability to judge the merit of painting and sculpture was among the necessary qualities of the ideal aristocrat as prescribed in Baldassarre Castliglione's *The Courtier*, written sometime between 1508 and 1518.[58] From this broad interest in painting among Italy's nobles and intellectuals, emerged a network of more invested viewers – a nascent form of the "connoisseur" or "amateur," known in the Renaissance alternatively as *intendenti*, *virtuosi*, or *dilettanti* – who were eager to keep abreast of the achievements of a select group of increasingly well-known painters and to secure works from these artists for themselves when possible.[59]

It is worth stressing that during the first half of the sixteenth century the number of paintings typically owned by an individual "collector" was surprisingly low, and, furthermore, that the vast majority of paintings still belonged to ostensibly functional categories such as devotional paintings and portraits. Nor were paintings exhibited in the sorts of groupings that we associate with collecting (with the possible exception of displays of portraits and *uomini famosi*), but were rather dispersed throughout the residence and

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[57] Some of the earliest documents attesting to the acquisition of paintings by esteemed artists on the second-hand market are attributable to Isabella. For example, upon the death of Michele Vianello in 1506, Isabella immediately set about to acquire a Jan van Eyck painting that she had admired during a visit to his Venetian residence in 1502; Brown 1972.

[58] Castiglione/Bull 2002, pp. 96.

[59] Cf. De Benedictis 1998, pp. 108ff.; Summerscale 2000, pp. 129-30. For the emergence of the "connoisseur" in the early modern period, see Gibson-Wood 1988; Fumaroli 1994.

intermingled with household furnishings and other categories of collectible items, including decorative arts, antiquities, and other rare objects. We must take into account that new genres of painting meant for private ownership, embodied above all in the *istoria*, were an altogether new category of painting. Their production and consumption necessarily lagged behind their theoretical formulation in Alberti's *De pictura*. In effect, new genres of painting had to be invented *tout court*, a process that was also dependent on the cultivation of new habits for acquiring, displaying, and viewing paintings, which in turn were frequently hampered by political and religious turbulence that disrupted economic and social conditions favourable to private consumption. Even among renowned collectors there were comparatively few examples of the sorts of elevated narrative painting called for by Alberti. In the meantime, it was more common for budding collectors simply to re-purpose existing devotional paintings and portraits, which were already privately owned and displayed alongside other genres of paintings on residential walls.[60] Looking at the scant evidence provided by the few inventories that exist prior to the mid-sixteenth century, it is nearly impossible to determine where function ends and collecting begins. Even such a celebrated artist as Leonardo, whose patrons are typically characterized as being highly literate in the visual arts, claimed to have been requested to repaint an image of a Madonna and Child because its owner was driven to inappropriate thoughts by its beauty.[61] His complaints are echoed in a similar anecdote regarding the prankster, "Nunziata," who, Vasari tells us,

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[60] Cf. Anderson 1988. Richard Goldthwaite points out that much more needs to be learned about the way paintings were moved around within domestic spaces. He underscores, for example, that the "movement of a picture like Botticelli's *Primavera* from the bedroom of a town house to the hall of a villa, involved much more than a rehanging;" Goldthwaite 1987, p. 171.

[61] Leonardo/Kemp 1989, pp. 26-28.

complied with the request of a client, who had asked for a picture of a Madonna that would not "provoke lascivious thoughts," by painting her with a beard.[62] These examples indicate that ownership of a painting did not necessarily entail a keen interest in its art, and even suggest that some patrons might have taken extra measures to ensure their paintings did not transgress established categories of functional, domestic painting.

Last, there is the question of numbers. To try to assign a requisite quantity of objects that might be considered to properly constitute a collection is a subjective endeavour at best, yet the issue cannot be dismissed altogether. Even before Rome succumbed to Reform-minded retrenchment in the wake of the Council of Trent, few paintings were privately owned given that collecting activities revolved instead around antiquarian artefacts,[63] while domestic painting usually took the form of edifying fresco cycles, as prescribed in *De cardinalatu* (Rome, 1510), Paolo Cortesi's "lifestyle" manual for aristocratic cardinals.[64] In Florence, political instability and Republican sentiment effectively put an end to the type of ambitious acquisition led by the Medici during the fifteenth century;[65] even with the

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[62] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, p. 479.

[63] Michel Hochmann points out that of known inventories dating to the first half of the sixteenth century very few paintings are mentioned, a situation that slowly begins to change in the 1560s; Hochmann 1998. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, Rome boasted some of the most spectacular collections in Italy. On the predominance of antiquities in Roman collections, see Falguières 1986, pp. 248ff.

[64] For Cortesi's text, see Weil-Garris Brandt and D'Amico 1980, pp. 90ff.

[65] Although the Medici had built up a sizeable collection of paintings over the course of the fifteenth century as recorded in Lorenzo's post-mortem inventory of 1492, most of their holdings were dispersed following the expulsion of the family in 1494. On the Medici collections of the fifteenth century, see Shearman 1975; Nuttall 2004, ch. 4, "The Medici." By contrast, in early sixteenth-century Florence, domestic paintings were more likely to be incorporated into more conservative forms of painted furnishings, usually with moralising themes, such as the celebrated panels for the bedroom of Pierfrancesco Borgherini, which depicted scenes from the Story of Joseph, and were executed by

definitive reinstatement of the Medici during the 1530s, Cosimo I strategically focused his patronage rather on monumental fresco cycles in public buildings, which served to assert Medicean authority against the ongoing threats to his power.[66] And in the progressive artistic climate of Venice, where Giorgione and Titian helped inaugurate new secular genres such as the pastoral landscape and the female nude,[67] of the collections known to us through Marc'Antonio Michiel's invaluable *Notizie* of noted works of art in public and private buildings in and around Venice compiled between 1521 and 1543 – remarkable in itself as one of the earliest sources attesting to the development of art – only four of the collectors he surveyed (Domenico Grimani, Gabriele Vendramin, Andrea Odoni, and Taddeo Contarini) could boast more than ten notable paintings of *any* genre.[68]

Thus, aside from the ambitious efforts of a handful of well-known early collectors, it was not until the second half of the sixteenth century that collecting began to flourish. Starting in the late 1540s, a spate of books on painting – a subject traditionally learned and discussed among artists in studios and workshops – appeared, clearly attesting to the broadening interest among non-practitioners in the visual arts. In the treatises of Paolo Pino,

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Pontormo, Andrea del Sarto, Granacci, and Bachiacca. On the Borgherini panels, see Braham 1979. For the persistence of moralizing domestic decoration in sixteenth-century Florence, see Conti 1980, pp. 245-46; De Benedictis 1998, pp. 56ff.

[66] On Cosimo's management of the collections, see Barocchi and Bertelà 2002, ch. 1, "Cosimo I e Vasari da Palazzo Vecchio a Palazzo Pitti 1540-1568." It was not until Francesco I came to power that the Medici's private collections became a priority, specifically, with the creation of the Tribuna to house prized works from the Medici collections on the upper floor of the newly completed Uffizi.

[67] On the development of secular genres of painting in Venice, see, most recently Brown 2006.

[68] Jestaz 2001, pp. 185ff. On Michiel's *Notizie*, see Fletcher 1981b; De Benedictis, Introduction, in Michiel 2000, pp. 9-23. For art collecting in Venice during the sixteenth century see also Fletcher 1981a; Franzoni 1981; Hochmann 1992; De Benedictis 1998, pp. 67-78; Aikema 1999; Fortini Brown 2004, ch. 8, "Theaters of the World"; Aikema 2005; Hochmann 2005.

Anton Francesco Doni, Michelangelo Biondo, and Lodovico Dolce, which were published in quick succession in Venice beginning in 1548, contemporary art theory was cast in the form of spirited dialogues that made the topic palatable and comprehensible to lay readers.[69] Also in Venice, Alberti's *De pictura* finally appeared in print in a 1547 translation by Lodovico Domenichi (it was preceded only by the Latin edition published in Basel in 1540).[70] However, it was Giorgio Vasari's monumental compilation of artists' biographies, the *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori ed architetti*, published in 1550 (and in an expanded edition in 1568 that included contemporary painters), which effectively signalled the advent of collecting. The *Vite* was foremost an exhaustive compendium of predominantly Tuscan painting, sculpture, and architecture evaluated according to mid-sixteenth-century theory and practice; but, as laid out in Vasari's introductory remarks, it was also a history of style, in which he aimed to impart his readers with the necessary knowledge to "distinguish the better from the good, and the best from the better."[71] Texts by Vasari and other authors not only served to guide the collector's choices, but also helped to establish the importance of works of art amongst the myriad *naturalia*, curiosities, antiquities, arms, and *objets d'art* that were

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[69] Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di pittura* (Venice, 1548), in Barocchi 1960-62, vol. 1, pp. 95-139; Anton Francesco Doni, *Disegno* (Venice, 1549), in Barocchi 1971-76, vol. 1, pp. 554-91. Michelangelo Biondo, *Della nobilissima pittura* (Venice, 1549), in Biondo 1972; Ludovico Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l'Aretino* (Venice, 1557), in Dolce/Roskill 2000. For a discussion of all four treatises in the context of Venetian collecting, see Hochmann 1992, ch. 2, "Le lettré, théoricien et critique d'art." For the emergence of dialogic treatises in art writing for amateurs, see Nativel 2002.

[70] Leon Battista Alberti, *La pittura tradotta per M. Lodovico Domenichi* (Venice, 1547), in Alberti 1988.

[71] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 3, pp. 3-4: "E mi sono ingegnato non solo di dire quel che hanno fatto, ma di scegliere ancora discorrendo il meglio dal buono e l'ottimo dal migliore." On Vasari as a guide to discerning style, see Gibson-Wood 1982, pp. 14-32; Sohm 2001, ch. 3, "Aestheticizing and Historicizing Style."

displayed throughout most households. Equipped with such guidance, collectors actively sought out paintings by celebrated artists from the past and acquired new works by contemporary artists at an increasing pace. But in advance of the development of the "collection" proper – that is, as an autonomous group of works of art that ideally were displayed alongside each other in a dedicated venue for the purposes of aesthetic and intellectual delectation – where did these early connoisseurs exercise their taste and discernment?

Although this brief overview of the early years of collecting may seem tangential to the subject of altarpieces in churches, it does have repercussions for our understanding of public, religious art. For the increasing intensity of artistic discourse among connoisseurially minded viewers at the beginning of the sixteenth century had to correspond to actual works, especially of the sort of complex, multi-figure paintings that were believed to best embody the new values in painting. With practices of collecting still circumscribed and inchoate, most opportunities for the display of artistic virtuosity came via public – and usually religious – commissions.

III. The Critical Audience for Altarpieces in Dolce's *Aretino*

In Lodovico Dolce's 1557 treatise on painting, the *Dialogo della pittura intitolato, Aretino*, the dialogue opens memorably with a set-piece introducing the interlocutors that takes place inside the Venetian church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in which Pietro Aretino chides his Tuscan counterpart, Giovan Francesco Fabrini for being caught admiring the wrong altarpiece:

> Just two weeks ago, my dear Fabrini, I happened to be in the beautiful church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo. I had gone there in company with the learned Giulio Camillo for the mass of St Peter Martyr. It is celebrated daily at the altar which has over it that large canvas telling the saint's story: a divine depiction, painted by the delicate hand of my distinguished friend Titian. So I saw then what appeared to be you looking all intently at that other painting – the one of St Thomas Aquinas which the Venetian artist Giovanni Bellini carried out in tempera many years back, along with other figures of saints.[72]

The clear implication is that Fabrini had his back to the *right* altarpiece, Titian's *St Peter Martyr* (fig. 31), which stood almost directly across the nave. Titian's altarpiece had been universally praised since its installation in the church in 1530 for its unusually dramatic portrayal of the saint's martyrdom as a murderous assault as well as its unexpected forested background.[73] Fabrini, rather, was facing Bellini's *St Vincent Ferrer* altarpiece (Dolce having misidentified the particular Dominican saint in question; fig. 32), which was out-of-date by mid-sixteenth-century standards with its polyptych format, and static, sharply delineated figures painted in tempera.[74] Although Aretino and Camillo were at SS. Giovanni e Paolo to attend the daily mass of St Peter Martyr, this does not prevent them from appreciating the purely pictorial qualities of Titian's altarpiece. Likewise, Fabrini does not

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[72] Dolce/Roskill 2000, pp. 84-85: "Hoggi fanno a punto quindici giorni, Fabrini mio, che ritrovandomi nella bellissima chiesa di San Giovanni e Paolo; nella quale m'era ridotto insieme col dottissimo Giulio Camillo per la solennità di San Pietro Martire, che si celebra ogni giorno allo altare, ove è posta quella gran tavola della Historia di cotal Santo, rappresentata divinamente in Pittura dalla delicatissima mano del mio illustre Signor Compare Titiano: parvemi di vedervi tutto intento a riguardar quell'altra tavola di San Thomaso d'Aquino, che in compagnia di altri Santi fu dipinta a guazzo molti anno sono, da Giovanni Bellino, Pittor Vinitiano."

[73] For the contemporary reception of the *St Peter Martyr* altarpiece, see Humfrey 1988, who situates the commission in the context of the rivalrous patronage of Venice's *scuole piccole* at SS. Giovanni e Paolo. See also Land 1990; Meilman 2000, ch. 8, "*Natura si vinta dall'arte*: The *Peter Martyr Altarpiece* as Sign for the Venetian Aesthetic."

[74] For Bellini's triptych within the model for competitive patronage at SS. Giovanni e Paolo, see Goffen 1985.

worship before Bellini's altarpiece, but rather "looks" at it intently. After a quick comparison of the paintings at hand, the interlocutors launch into the dialogue proper: part primer of art theory for non-practitioners, part Venetian corrective to Vasari in which Titian soundly trumps Vasari's Tuscan hero, Michelangelo.

Dolce's emphasis on the artistic qualities of the paintings at hand was, of course, conditioned by the nature of the discourse. His goal, after all, was to instruct lay readers on the proper discernment of painting. However, Dolce's discussion of Titian notably revolves around religious paintings – Titian's *Assumption*, *Pesaro Altarpiece*, *St Nicholas Altarpiece*, and the abovementioned *Martyrdom of St Peter* – and excludes his famed mythologies and other secular works. Dolce may have been responding to the pressure of mounting criticisms in the years leading up to Trent against so-called abuses of religious art;[75] he expounds at length on decorum particularly as it pertains to religious art, and does not hesitate to lay into Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, which was roundly criticized for its excessive nudity and artfully contorted figures, as will be discussed further in Chapter 4.[76] But at the same time, these were also public works, and his choice of subjects does evoke the real way that altarpieces were viewed and discussed in churches. The first recorded mention of Titian's *Martyrdom of St Peter* altarpiece occurs in a letter of 1537 from Pietro Aretino to the Florentine sculptor Niccolò Pericoli, called Il Tribolo. In the letter Aretino recounts a meeting with Sebastiano Serlio and Titian in which he informed them that Il Tribolo, who had seen the painting during a visit to Venice accompanied by the sculptor, Benvenuto

[75] Cf. Rogers 1992, pp. 115-16.

[76] Dolce/Roskill, pp. 161-67.

Cellini, a few years prior, had declared it to be the most beautiful painting in Italy.[77] Aretino proceeds to describe at length Tribolo's alleged response in ekphrastic terms, creating an intense and vivid image of the impact that Titian's dramatic invention and illusionistic naturalism had on its viewers. Indeed, in reviewing viewer response to the altarpiece over the centuries, Norman Land observes that sixteenth-century viewers of Titian's *Martyrdom of St Peter* differed from their seventeenth-century counterparts in that they tended to discuss the painting in predominantly human terms, in which the religious subject matter was assumed and actions were understood as expressions of emotions.[78]

Toward the end of the *Aretino*, Dolce's account of the early reception of Titian's *Assumption* (fig. 33), which was installed on the high altar of the Frari on 19 May 1518 – an event recorded by the Venetian chronicler Marin Sanudo – touches again on the question of the critical audience for altarpieces.[79] The *Assumption* was Titian's first major public commission in the city. It was an ambitious undertaking and a decisive departure from Venetian traditions: Titian eschewed the empirical precision and serene manner exemplified in the works of Giovanni Bellini, still Venice's foremost painter at the time of his death in 1516, in favour of a luminous palette and expressive dynamism that were informed by central Italian art.[80] According to Dolce, reaction to the altarpiece was hostile at first, although

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[77] Land 1990, pp. 297-98.

[78] Land 1990, pp. 311-14. For similar arguments regarding contemporary accounts of Michelangelo's Medici Tomb in S. Lorenzo, see Günther 2006.

[79] Rosand 1971, p. 196.

[80] For a discussion of Titian's *Assumption* in relation to its precedents, see Humfrey 1993b.

audiences soon came to "marvel at the new style."[81] Dolce's account of the initial resistance to Titian's innovations is complemented by Carlo Ridolfi's later report that while the altarpiece was still in progress, Fra Germano, the friar who had commissioned it, continually expressed his displeasure with the disproportionately large size of the figures, indicating that the painting had been problematic for its patrons as well.[82] Ridolfi further explains that it was only when a counter-offer for the altarpiece was proffered by the imperial ambassador that the monks dropped their complaints about the work.[83]

But what is perhaps most telling is Dolce's explanation for the unfavourable reception of the *Assumption*. He explains: "the clumsy painters and dim-witted masses, who had seen up till then nothing but the dead and cold creations of Giovanni Bellini, Gentile and Vivarini (because Giorgione had not yet received a public commission for a work in oils, and that his creations were mostly limited to half-figures and portraits) – works which had no movement or projection – grossly maligned [Titian's] picture."[84] In other words, Dolce makes a clear distinction between public (churches) and private (collections) venues, noting that the

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[81] Dolce/Roskill 2000, pp. 188-89: "Dipoi raffreddandosi la invidia, & aprendo loro a polo la verità gliocchi, comiciarono le gente a stupir la nuova maniera trovata in Vinegia di Titiano."

[82] Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte* (Venice, 1658): "Dicesi, che Titiano lavorasse quella tavola nel Convento de' Frati medesimi, si che veniva molestato dalle frequenti visite loro, e da Fra Germano curatore dell'opera era spesso ripreso, che tenesse quegli Apostoli di troppo smisurata grandezza, durando egli non poca fatica a correggere il poco loro intendimento, e dargli ad intendere, che le figure dovevano esser proportionate a1 luogo vastissimo, ove havevansi a vedere, e che di vantaggio si fariano diminuite;" quoted in Rosand 1971, p. 198.

[83] Rosand 1971, p. 198, note 9; cf. Humfrey 1993a, p. 85.

[84] Dolce/Roskill 2000, pp. 186-90: "Con tutto cio i Pittori goffi, e lo sciocco volgo, che insino alhora non havevano veduto altro, che le cose morte e fredde di Giovanni Bellino, di Gentile, e del Vivarino (perché Giorgione nel lavorare a olio non haveva ancora havuto lavoro publico; e per lo piu non faceva altre opere, che meze figure, e ritratti) lequali erano senza movimento, e senza rilveo: dicevano detta tavola un gran male."

innovative canvasses of Giorgione – whose subtle and atmospheric handling of colour realized the luministic and expressive potential of oil paint and paved the way for Titian's famed *colore* – had gone largely unnoticed because he had not received a public commission and rather worked mostly in "half figures and portraits," that is, the types of paintings that were privately owned. Certainly, many elite viewers would have had access to Giorgione's privately owned works (not to mention his ill-fated frescoes for the facade of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi). By contrast, he implies that works by the Bellini and the Vivarini were more familiar to audiences, because they were publicly on display. In the humid climate of Venice, which precluded large-scale frescoes, that meant altarpieces. It is noteworthy that Dolce also includes painters – a group that, although visually literate, did not always enjoy access to paintings in the private realm – among those viewers that would have been unfamiliar with Giorgione's paintings. Even if we suspect that some degree of rhetoric was at play, Dolce's remarks – made some four decades after the altarpiece's installation – reveal something of the continued importance of churches in the discourse on art. His awareness of the role played by venue in establishing the reputations of artists at the beginning of the century is all the more remarkable from a perspective that would have been more deeply informed by the culture of art collecting, which was already beginning to flourish by mid-century.

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Churches remained virtually uncontested as the most prominent and prestigious venue in which the arts were judged for the next two centuries, even with the expansion of secular genres painting. Compared to other genres of painting, altarpieces demanded great outlays of resources, were subject to intense competitive pressures, were widely visible, and, as we have

already seen, provoked strong critical responses. The stakes were high among a certain class of influential patrons and viewers who had come to expect innovation and demonstrable difficulty, and for the painters who were well aware of the impact that success or failure could have on their reputation. Nevertheless, in terms of the commissioning and functioning of altarpieces, much remained the same. Altarpieces were still intended to serve as efficacious liturgical instruments and as public displays of patronal status, and in Italy these ends were still contingent on accepted standards of "beauty." But with beauty now signalled through the talents of the painter, an altarpiece by an especially well-known artist was likely to attract attention from much wider audiences, including curious artists, literati, and the ruling elite.

By the 1490s, Savonarola already despaired that religious images had strayed from their vocation, complaining that "they make figures in churches with such art and such ornamentation that they extinguish the light of God and of true contemplation, and in these you are not contemplating God but the *artifice of the figures*."[85] Savonarola was unusually articulate on the visual arts, making frequent use of metaphors on painting in his sermons as well as expressing informed condemnations of over-ornamentation of churches.[86] He consistently espoused the view that images should be simple and restrained in embellishment, qualities, he believed, that would best fulfil the traditional duties of religious images: to instruct the illiterate, to stimulate devotion, and to facilitate the internalization of spiritual

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[85] Savonarola 1930-35 (emphasis mine), vol. 2, pp. 161-62: "Vedi che oggi si fa le figure nelle chiese con tanto artificio e tanto ornate e tirate guastano il lume di Dio e la vera contemplazione e non si considera Iddio, ma solo lo artificio che è nelle figure;" translated in Belting 1994, p. 472.

[86] For Savonarola and the visual arts, see Steinberg 1977; Hall 1990.

truths.[87] His complaint here is especially evocative in that he sidesteps the usual criticisms regarding the abuses of images, such as vainglorious patronage and indecorous content, and rather suggests that the problem with some religious images was that they had provoked a "connoisseurial" response. His criticisms are consistent with his own tastes for religious art as described in an account of his sermon on the feast of the Assumption in 1497 by the Pseudo-Burlamacchi, which concluded in the church of S. Marco in front of an (unknown) altarpiece of a Madonna and Child. The altarpiece is described in some detail: "The Holy Virgin was sitting on a throne, on the steps of which were five short mottoes in letters of gold ... the ornamentation of the ceiling and walls of the chapel were of gold and of silver, silk and ornate tapestries."[88] In other words, Savonarola was not averse to the rich ornament characteristic of more traditional altarpieces, for it intensified devotion, but rather he objected to the emphasis on beauty and invention associated with modern values of painting. Although the passage has been marshalled as evidence of the qualitative change in religious art by the end of the century,[89] it is worth dwelling on the possibility that Savonarola was not just speaking of his own personal distaste for these perceived artistic *dimostrazioni*, but describing what he observed to be a new phenomenon, whereby some religious paintings attracted – and addressed – a non-devotional audience.

One of the more curious outcomes of the connoisseurial interest in altarpieces was the

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[87] See most recently Burke 2004, ch. 8, "Painted Prayers: Savonarola and the Audience of Images."

[88] Pseudo-Burlamacchi 1937, pp. 96-97: "La Santa Vergine sedeva in un trono, alli gradi del quale era cinque brevi scritti a lettere d'oro ... gli adornamenti del cielo et degli lati della cappella, d'oro et d'argento, seta et arazzi ornati;" quoted and translated in Burke 2004, p. 172.

[89] See, for example Belting 1994, p. 472; Campbell 2002, p. 606; Burke 2004, p. 168.

preservation of demonstrably unfinished altarpieces. When altarpieces were left unfinished, usually because the painter had died or the terms of the original commission had changed, the traditional solution was to hire another painter to complete the work. As we have already seen, when Filippino Lippi died in 1504 while working on the *Deposition* for the high altarpiece of the Annunziata, Perugino was brought in to complete the painting in accordance with Lippi's intentions. The exhibition of Leonardo's *St Anne* cartoon; however, demonstrated that "unfinished" works had achieved a legitimate, status beyond the studio.

When Leonardo abandoned work on the *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 24) upon his departure for Milan in 1481, an entirely new panel was commissioned instead from Filippino Lippi to be based on the composition of the abandoned work. It is possible that Leonardo's creative engagement with the altarpiece had already ended even before his departure. Paolo Giovio lamented that Leonardo's insatiable quest for novelty kept him from completing works, while Vasari acknowledged his difficulties bringing his "marvellous" ideas to fruition.[90] Indeed, the tightly knit composition, dynamic interactions, and individualized attitudes of the figures were all complete in the underpainting, which, in its lack of colour, arguably made Leonardo's compositional lessons all the more clear to observers. Significantly, the painting was not only preserved in its incomplete state, but, according to Vasari, was displayed in the residence of Amerigo Benci, who had also commissioned Leonardo's famous marriage portrait of his daughter, Ginevra, in 1474.[91] Likewise,

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[90] Giovio 1999, p. 235; Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 627-28.

[91] In both editions of the *Vite*, Vasari reports that the painting was housed in the residence of Amerigo Benci; presumably, the painting had been acquired by Don'Antonio sometime after 1568; Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 631.

Michelangelo's unfinished *Entombment* (fig. 34), which had been commissioned in 1500 for the chapel of Giovanni Ebu at S. Agostino in Rome, was preserved after the artist abandoned work on the panel the following year.[92] A certain 'maestro Andrea' was hired to create an entirely new altarpiece, while Michelangelo's panel was retained presumably by his patron, Cardinal Raffaele Riario, despite the fact that the prominent, foreground figure of the Virgin is completely missing.[93]

Whereas Leonardo's and Michelangelo's altarpieces were preserved in private settings, Raphael's unfinished *Madonna del Baldacchino* was installed as a proper altarpiece sometime around 1540 in the newly consecrated Turini chapel in the Cathedral at Pescia (fig. 35).[94] The altarpiece had been originally commissioned in 1507 for the Dei family chapel in S. Spirito. For his first public commission in Florence, Raphael had designed a traditional Madonna Enthroned with saints, but set the figures within a rigorously classical setting that distinguishes the altarpiece from its fifteenth-century predecessors. The project was abandoned the following year when Julius II summoned him to Rome to take up the prestigious project for the Vatican *stanze*. The Dei family evidently held out hope that

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[92] For the commission, see Hirst 1981a; Nagel 1994. Nagel hypothesizes that Michelangelo abandoned the project due to his frustration with what was a highly experimental attempt to adapt the depiction of movement called for by the narrative subject to the conventions of frontality and symmetry associated with traditional altarpiece conventions; Nagel 2000, ch. 1, "Transport and *Transitus*."

[93] Little is known about the early history of the altarpiece before it appeared in the 1649 inventory of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome. Given its provenance and good condition, however, it can safely be presumed to have entered into a private collection from an early date. The project was supervised by Michelangelo's friend, Jacopo Gallo, and Bartolomeo de Dossis, a lawyer connected with Cardinal Riario, who was Michelangelo's first patron in Rome. It seems most likely that the altarpiece would have been retained by one of these associates; Hirst 1981a.

[94] For the commission and subsequent history of the altarpiece, see *Raffaello a Firenze* 1984, no. 10, pp. 119-29; Meyer zur Capellen 2001, no. 40, pp. 276-81.

Raphael would one day complete their altarpiece, for it was only after his death in 1520 that they finally hired Rosso Fiorentino to create a replacement. At the time of his death, Raphael's fame was at its height; his works, which were already difficult to attain, had abruptly become immeasurably rarer. Baldassarre Turini, the papal datary to Leo X and one of the executors of Raphael's will, thus acquired the unfinished altarpiece as the centrepiece of his planned chapel in his native cathedral. The large chapel, which was annexed to the church, was an extravagant architectural and sculptural undertaking that would take decades to complete and for which no expense was spared. In this context, the incomplete state of the *Madonna del Baldacchino* is all the more conspicuous. The paint is visibly thin, with no completely finished sections and most of the background, as well as the putti in the foreground, left at the stage of underpainting. Given that most of his late works involved heavy participation from his shop, as an early work, its unfinished state arguably only made its status as a work by Raphael even more compelling. It was a work demonstrably by no other hand.[95]

Raphael's altarpiece, which had been kept in his studio, was known to Florentine painters and must have served as a model for Fra Bartolommeo's *Pala della Signoria* (fig. 36), which also remained unfinished.[96] The altarpiece, which depicts the Madonna and St Anne surrounded by a host of Florentine protector-saints and angels, was commissioned in

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[95] The restoration and technical examination of the *Madonna del Baldacchino* undertaken in 1990-91 confirms that no other artist had worked on the painting; Padovani 1991.

[96] The altarpiece was originally commissioned in 1498 from Filippino Lippi; however, only the frame (carved by Baccio d'Agnolo from 1499-1502) was delivered before his death in 1504, which thus determined the dimensions for Fra Bartolommeo's version. It remains uncertain why Soderini waited six years to resume the commission. For the commission and subsequent history of the altarpieces, see *Fra' Bartolomeo* 1990, nos. 58-62, pp. 219-34; *Età di Savonarola* 1996, no. 21, pp. 98-103.

1510 by the *gonfaliere* of Florence, Piero Soderini, for the newly rebuilt Hall of the Great Council in the Palazzo Vecchio. The altarpiece was conceived on a grand scale. It was to form part of a program of works glorifying the new Florentine Republic (including the rivalrous battles scenes by Leonardo and Michelangelo) and would have been the largest altarpiece in Florence upon its completion. Upon the return of the Medici in 1512, however, the council hall was demolished and work on the altarpiece, which had reached the stage of underpainting, came to a halt.[97] Fra Bartolommeo resumed work on the painting in 1517 under direction from the Medici; however, little progress was made by the time he died later on that year. It is uncertain what happened to the altarpiece in the years immediately following the Frate's death, but upon the decisive return to power of the Medici in 1532, it was finally installed in its unfinished state in the chapel of Ottaviano de' Medici in San Lorenzo, which was appropriately dedicated to St Anne.

Although one cannot dismiss the genuine visual appeal these altarpieces may have had nor the legitimate devotional and even political roles that they played, the signalling of worth was still an integral component of their efficacy as liturgical instruments. Even with the increased importance placed on artists' status in the economies of *ius patronatus* as discussed in Chapter 1, patrons and artists still endeavoured to achieve the highest possible quality in invention as well as execution. An unfinished altarpiece, by contrast, manifestly lacks "quality." In the case of Raphael's and Fra Bartolommeo's unfinished altarpieces, this requirement could only have been sanctioned by the fame and prestige they enjoyed among critical audiences of painting.

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[97] The state of the painting by 1513 is documented in the dissolution of Fra Bartolommeo's partnership with Mariotto Albertinelli; *Fra' Bartolomeo* 1990, p. 219.

IV. Attitudes of Viewership in Churches

There is little doubt that those who commissioned chapel altarpieces had a sincere desire to pay honour to God, the Church, their family, and their community. But leaving aside the expressed interests of their patrons, and the clerics who administered to them, the role that altarpieces played among larger audiences of church visitors is less clear. As Julian Gardner has stressed, outside of the prescribed rituals of liturgical ceremonies, very little is in fact known regarding the day-to-day use of altarpieces.[98] This is especially true of privately funded side altars, which served primarily for extra-liturgical devotions and were used less frequently for official masses.[99] Even seemingly basic questions such as what kind of access parishioners had to privately owned altarpieces or the prevalence of shutters and other coverings remain uncertain.[100] The challenges faced in understanding how early modern visitors negotiated the interiors of churches have only been exacerbated by the radical transformations that almost all church interiors have undergone during the intervening centuries.

Prior to the Counter Reformation, churches in Italy were filled with mural decorations, altarpieces, votive images, reliquaries, and tombs, not to mention the small shrines that appeared throughout the public sphere, housed in niches along streets and in

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[98] Gardner 1994, pp. 18-19; cf. Van Os 1990, p. 32; Burke 2004, pp. 120ff.; Trexler 2004.

[99] Van der Ploeg 2002, pp. 111-12.

[100] Gardner 1994, p. 19. To my knowledge, a study along the lines of Alessandro Nova's exemplary survey of Lombard altar coverings has not been undertaken for Florence, Venice, or other major artistic centres in Italy; see Nova 1994.

squares.[101] In this competitive visual environment, new altarpieces took their place alongside established cult images, from those with traditions of usage in processions and feast days to more recent miraculous images that quickly amassed devotees. However, the same forces that fuelled the rapid expansion of *ius patronatus* and the proliferation of images in churches also meant that devotional practices had become acutely localized.[102] That is to say, of the dozens of images on display in any given church, only a handful were likely to trigger attitudes of reverence in any particular viewer. Perceived efficacy was all-important when it came to the veneration of religious images, relics, and *ex votos*, whether due to a perceived personal or communal connection with the depicted saints, their "ancient" origins, their alleged thaumaturgic and apotropaic abilities, or other associations with miraculous events. The extreme and highly changeable selectivity exercised by worshippers was already observed by Franco Sacchetti in a sermon of 1365, in which he criticizes Florentine nobles who flocked to the latest Marian cults according to the fashion of the day.[103] Little had evidently changed by the fifteenth century; in the *De re aedificatoria*, Alberti cannot conceal his disdain for the irrational devotional habits directed toward cult images: "I ask myself, is the old belief still so popular, that a painting of a god in one place should be more receptive to the prayers and votive offerings of the righteous, than a statue of that same god positioned

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[101] On the ubiquity of religious images in early modern Italian cities, see Muir 2002.

[102] Trexler 1980, pp. 53ff.; cf. Muir 2002, pp. 56ff.

[103] Sacchetti 1857, p. 218: "E la gente grossa e nuova abbandona le cose vecchie, e trae alle nuove. Quanti mutamenti sono stati nella mia città pur nella figura di Nostra Donna! E tu un tempo che a Santa Maria da Cigoli ciascuno correa; poi s'andava a Santa Maria della Selva; poi ampliò la fama di Santa Maria in Pruneta; poi a Fiesole a Santa Maria Primerana; e poi a Nostra Donna d'Orto San Michele; poi s'abbandonorono tutte, e alla Nunziata de' Servi."

right next to it?"[104] But as Richard Trexler explains, ecclesiastical authorities were acutely aware that the dignity of their churches depended on the quality of their images and relics, and often sought to wrest them from private owners who were likewise interested in enhancing their own status by attracting devotees. [105] In more practical terms, these cult objects also stood to generate considerable income for their owners. Such was the potency of miraculous images in popular spirituality that they could prompt the expedient construction of new churches to house them. During the 1480s, the small churches of S. Maria delle Carceri in Prato and S. Maria dei Miracoli in Venice, for example, were quickly built for the express purpose of housing miracle working images of very recent origin.[106] And, for all the artistic achievements on display at the Annunziata, it was rather its famous cult image of the *Annunciation* – a fresco that had been miraculously completed by an angel shortly after the church was first founded in 1250 – that inspired the most fervent veneration.[107]

Indeed, much of what we do know about popular piety revolves around such cult images, which are usually, but not necessarily, of inconsequential "artistic" value.[108]

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[104] Book VII, ch. 17, in Alberti/Orlandi 1966, vol. 2, p. 661: "Aut quid esse causae dicam, cur a maioribus acceptam opinionem de istiusmodi rebus tanti faciant, ut istic audire dei pictam effigiem, illic vero eiusdem ipsius istius dei statuam proxima in statione locatam preces etiam vota iustorum audire minus opinentur?" Translated in Alberti/Rykwert 1988, p. 243.

[105] Trexler 1973; Humfrey 1993a, p. 61. Cf. Trexler 1980, pp. 92-96, who notes the active, though not always effective, resistance of church authorities in Florence to the efforts of families and confraternities to attach themselves to venerated objects through the use of "framing" devices as a means of attracting devotees and enhancing their power and social status

[106] For S. Maria delle Carceri, see Davies 1993; Davies 1994; Maniura 2004. For S. Maria dei Miracoli in Venice, see Goy 2006, pp. 163ff. For the typology of pilgrimage churches, see Thunø 2004.

[107] For the cult of the Annunziata, see especially, Holmes 2004b.

[108] See, for example Trexler 1972; Trexler 1980, pp. 85-128; Freedberg 1989, esp. ch. 6, " Image and

Conversely, evidence attesting to the lay devotion to many of those altarpieces habitually studied in scholarship on Renaissance art is meagre. Institutional and legalistic sources (such as clerical ledgers and calendars, testamentary endowments, *ius patronatus* contracts) are invaluable documents attesting to an altarpiece's liturgical usage as well as its patrons' needs; however, they are less illuminating about the matter of their popular veneration.[109] For many scholars, this disparity is sidestepped by examining religious art primarily in terms of the myriad contextual forces operative at the point of production as manifest in content, format, and style.[110] For others, a more radical solution calls for the priorities of art historical inquiry to be redressed in order to better accommodate visual "artefacts," which they rightly argue are more representative of broader devotional practices, and hence, more informative of societal behaviours and religious beliefs.[111] However, the problem can also be approached by considering the way altarpieces were viewed in churches by other audiences.

The typical church interior of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was far from being a unified ritual space, and accordingly, behaviours within it could vary widely. In his influential studies of ritual behaviour in fifteenth-century Florence, Trexler makes a clear

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Pilgrimage;" Thunø and Wolf 2004; Cornelison and Montgomery 2005; Jacobs 2008; Cole and Zorach 2009.

[109] For an excellent overview of the various types of legalistic evidence regarding the usage of altarpieces, see Gaston 1987; Gardner 1993; Humfrey 1993a, ch. 2, "Purposes and Uses."

[110] The scholarship on Renaissance patronage is too vast to cite here. I refer the reader instead to the following overviews of patronage studies: Cooper 1996; Rubin 2007, pp. 316-19. See also Jill Burke's excellent overview of the influence of social history for art history in her book-length study of fifteenth-century Florentine patronage; Burke 2004, ch. 1, "Introduction."

[111] Freedberg 1989. In recent years, there have been an increasing number of studies devoted to pilgrimage images, in particular. See, for example, the essays from the international conference on cult image held in 2003 at the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome, "L'immagine miracolosa nella cultura tardomedievale e rinascimentale" in Thunø and Wolf 2004.

distinction between churches and the objects that they housed, and argues that "the ritual-inducing element in the church was sacred presence, and not abstract enclosure of space."[112] Devotees visited churches usually with a single-minded focus to participate in Mass or to pray before a specific miraculous image or relic; church attendance was otherwise sporadic and casual.[113] Trexler further explains that churches also could be highly secular spaces used as meeting places for social and civic activities. He sums up the situation with the simple maxim that "closer to prized sacred objects, devotees would be brought to their knees, but further away their behaviour would slant toward the profane."[114] Contemporary accounts of behaviour in churches back up Trexler's claims. For example, in the 1420s, St Bernardino of Siena railed against the abuses of ecclesiastical spaces, from the countless corporate meetings that were conducted there, to the indecorous social gatherings.[115] Similarly, in the 1480s, the German pilgrim, Felix Faber, complained of the worldliness of the attendees of festival services at SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, who he claimed only attended because of the lively music ceremonies.[116] While in the sixteenth century, both the Venetian reformer, Gasparo Contarini, and the French chronicler, Michel de Montaigne recounted, not without some degree of indignation, of having seen men openly having conversations or standing with their backs to the altar during Mass.[117] As Peter Burke deduces from the preponderance

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[112] Trexler 1973; Trexler 1980, pp. 53.

[113] Trexler 1973.

[114] Trexler 1980, pp. 54-55.

[115] Gaston 2006, pp. 338ff.

[116] Chambers, Pullan, and Fletcher 1992, pp. 198-99.

[117] Burke 1999, p. 209.

of injunctions against such activities as walking through churches during Mass, such disruptions were indeed a common occurrence.[118] All of this is to say that churches were not strictly sacrosanct spaces – at least in their day-to-day activities – a frequently neglected aspect of their functioning that challenges any assumption that devotional pictures elicited devotional responses.

Alexander Nagel observes that the "historicizing reaction" in recent scholarship on Renaissance art to the past aestheticization of altarpieces has tended to obscure the real ways in which they were viewed as artistic objects in the Renaissance.[119] His remarks are echoed by Paul Hills, who points out that compared to the art historical focus on (knowable) intent, that is, the confluence of circumstances in which a given altarpiece was produced, much less is usually known about the practical circumstances of its usage.[120] Certainly most scholars would allow that some Renaissance altarpieces did perform double duty – as objects of devotion and as works of art – yet the focus in recent decades has remained steadfastly on the former. It is not my contention that we draw any firm conclusions from the comparatively scant evidence regarding the popular worship of artistically significant altarpieces. Rather, I wish to open up the discussion regarding alternative ways that these altarpieces were viewed in churches, with a focus on the "aesthetic" response that they elicited, a reception that is as historically valid as the spiritual role they were intended to fulfil.

Indeed, the viewership of any religious painting was not an undifferentiated body, but

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[118] Burke 1999, p. 210. See also Humfrey 1993a, p. 59.

[119] Nagel 1995, p. 139.

[120] Hills 1990, pp. 42-45.

rather comprised not only the clergy, the patrons, and the laity, but also those interested in its artistry. Could it not be that the dual aspect of altarpieces – religious and artistic – was played out among different groups of viewers, in which some would have engaged foremost with its function as "work of art," without necessarily also adopting an attitude of devotional attention? When the question is posed this way, the persistent art historical problem of the representativeness of so-called masterpieces vis-à-vis the more prevalent images of popular piety fall away. In turn, the "aesthetic" response of their beholders, rather than being dismissed as ahistorical, helps to shed light on the question of the viewership of Renaissance painting, especially as it relates to nascent conceptions of art and art collecting. In the following chapter, I will consider the altarpieces that specifically addressed these connoisseurial viewers.

Chapter 3. The Altarpiece as *Dimostrazione*: Three Case Studies

In the previous chapter, I discussed the emergence of a critical audience that regarded altarpieces with a view to their artistic qualities. In this chapter, this phenomenon is examined in terms of the altarpieces themselves through several brief case studies drawn from the first two decades of the sixteenth century. Each of the altarpieces discussed below displayed conspicuous *dimostrazioni* of invention and difficulty; and in each of these examples, documentary evidence attests to the artists' and/or patrons' expressed intentions for their respective commissions. Setting aside the question of the representativeness of these altarpieces vis-à-vis broader practices of making and viewing religious images, I will argue that these "exceptional" altarpieces can be productively understood in terms of what had become a pervasive aesthetic purview that was operative among connoisseurially minded viewers, an attitude that selectively responded to those altarpieces that purposefully invited their attention.

I. Altarpieces and Artistic Rivalry

If patrons sought to acquire altarpieces by renowned masters that would be recognized by their peers in order to enhance their prestige, painters were equally aware of the acclaim that a prominent and successful commission could bring them. Albrecht Dürer's *Feast of the Rose Garlands* (fig. 37) is not the first altarpiece to have been executed with the explicit goal of staking a reputation, but it is arguably the best documented. The painting was commissioned toward the end of 1505 by the newly founded German confraternity dedicated to the Rosary for their chapel in the church of S. Bartolomeo near the Fondaco dei Tedeschi,

the social and commercial centre of the German colony.[1] Competitive patronage was pervasive among Venetian confraternities – including the five *scuole grande* as well as the more than two hundred *scuole piccolo* – which were willing to spend considerable fees to procure the services of the city's most renowned artists.[2] Such attitudes also extended to the many foreign confraternities in Venice, which sought to assert their national or regional patriotism through art patronage.

The *Feast of the Rose Garlands* proclaims its patriotic function through its subject, iconographic sources, and most important for us here, its choice of artist. The altarpiece depicts the Virgin and Child distributing rosaries aided by St Dominic to a retinue of worshippers – rendered in portrait likenesses of the members of the confraternity – who are led by the Pope on the left, and the Emperor Maximilan on the right.[3] The iconography derives from a 1476 woodcut that appeared in the statutes of the Cologne Confraternity of the Rosary founded a year prior, which similarly depicted the Madonna distributing rosaries to a group of ecclesiastics on left, and the laity, led by the Emperor, on the right.[4] But in this reformulation, the emperor and pope are crowned by the Virgin and Christ, respectively,

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[1] The confraternity had only been granted official status by the Council of Ten on 22 March 1504, although it was actually founded until 1506. This latter dates corresponds with a letter from Dürer of 6 January 1506, which mentions that he had had been commissioned by the Germans to paint a panel. For the commission of the altarpiece, see Humfrey 1991, p. 22. For the Confraternity of the Rosary in Germany and Venice, see Bartilla 2006.

[2] On the rivalrous aspects of confraternity patronage in Venice, see Humfrey 1988.

[3] The identities of the worshippers, with few exceptions, however, are uncertain. See Humfrey 1991, pp. 22-24; Lübbeke 2006.

[4] The woodcut, in turn, derives from a painting of the *Adoration of the Magi* by Stefan Lochner of 1440 in the Cologne Cathedral. For the relation of the composition and iconography of the *Feast of the Rose Garlands* with regard to its various sources, see Humfrey 1991, pp. 24ff; Lübbeke 2006.

creating a clear statement of temporal authority.[5] In choosing Dürer for the commission, it was not uncommon for foreign confraternities to enlist the services of native rather than local artists. Dürer, who was arguably Germany's most renowned artist, happened to be in the city at the time; although the felicitous timing of his visit suggests that he may have been summoned to Venice expressly for this purpose.[6]

For Dürer, however, the altarpiece represented much more than a lucrative commission. As he discussed at length in a series of letters written between December 1505 and November 1506 to his friend and patron in Nuremberg, Wilibald Pirckheimer, it was also an opportunity to decisively silence his detractors.[7] Despite (or perhaps because of) his reputation, Dürer was not well received by Venetian painters. Already by February, Dürer complained of their antagonism (although he did enjoy a friendship with the city's preeminent painter, Giovanni Bellini, whom he famously described as "old, but still best in Venice"). He bitterly reported to Pirckheimer that not only did the Venetians criticize him for being insufficiently versed in the antique manner, but that they then went on to copy from his own works.[8] Dürer was not the first foreign artist to receive a hostile reception from the Venetian painters, and his popularity among the patriciate no doubt exacerbated the proprietary tendencies of the local painters. Dürer had visited Italy previously in 1498 as part of his artistic education; but on this second trip, he was an established painter who enjoyed

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[5] For the altarpiece in the context of German nationalism, see Koreny 1995.

[6] Cf. Humfrey 1991, p. 25.

[7] For Dürer and Pirckheimer, see Andrews 1986/87.

[8] Letter of 7 February 1506, Dürer/Conway 1958, pp. 48-49.

considerable renown both at home and abroad. He was especially well regarded in Venice on account of his immensely popular prints, which were valued for their high degree of realism and closely observed detail.[9] In his *Ricordi cerca gli ornamenti della casa*, first published in Venice in 1549, Sabba da Castiglione mentions the popularity of engravings and woodcuts in the decoration of *studioli,* singling out Dürer's prints, above all, as the best.[10]

Dürer was especially sensitive to matters of status and reputation. As his numerous self-portraits attest – and specifically his famous self-portrait of 1501 in which he makes overt use of the conventions of Christ icons as a means to proclaim his artistic skill as a God-given talent – he was perhaps more self-conscious in fashioning his image as an intellectual and creator than any of his contemporaries, not only in the North but in Italy as well.[11] This concern for his reputation seems to have only intensified his resolve to demonstrate his superiority with the *Feast of the Rose Garlands*. As many scholars have observed, Dürer strategically sought to outdo the Venetians on their own terms, that is, in their renowned mastery of colour and light.[12] Indeed the work is characterized by a looser, almost shimmering brushwork and a wider-ranging palette of clear, brilliant hues than seen in his

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[9] For the popularity of Dürer's prints among noted Venetian collectors such as Cardinal Domenico Grimani and Gabriele Vendramin, see Bury 1985, pp. 14-16. For the vogue for Northern art in Venice, see Christiansen 1998; Aikema 1999.

[10] Castiglione 1555, fol. 52r: "Et chi adorna con carte impresse in rame, & in legno in Italia, ò altrove, & sopra tutto di quelle venute di Germania, & massimamente di mano di Alberto Dureri, certo non che eccellentissimo, ma divino, nel bolino, ò di Luca suo discepolo, il quale và avvicinandosi assai al suo gran maestro."

[11] For Dürer's self-portraits, see Koerner 1993, pp. 63ff.

[12] See, for example, Chastel 1981, pp. 462-63; Humfrey 1991, pp. 26ff. In her analysis of Dürer's techniques, Katherine Crawford Luber also suggests that Dürer also engaged in eristic competition with his esteemed friend Giovanni Bellini, in which he respectfully tried to rival or even surpass Venice's foremost painter; Crawford Luber 2005, pp. 110ff.

other paintings. At the same time, he retained his characteristically Northern attentiveness to verisimilitude in the delineation of detail, especially in his rendering of surfaces and textures and the individualized physiognomies of the worshippers. The altarpiece was nothing less than a pictorial rejoinder to the Venetian painters' criticisms.

Dürer's intentions for the altarpiece are illuminated by clues in his letters as well as the image itself. Behind the main grouping is the unmistakable self-portrait of Dürer who appears in the background on the right, along with an unidentified man, the only figures who stand rather than worship the Madonna (fig. 38).[13] This type of "spectator" self-portrait in itself is not exceptional, as there was a long tradition dating back to the Middle Ages of painters, sculptors, and architects who included self-portraits in their work.[14] An early example for altarpieces occurs in Taddeo di Bartolo's *Assumption* triptych of 1401 for the Duomo of Montepulciano, in which the painter's name saint bears noticeably individualized features and addresses the viewer with an overt hand gesture (fig. 39). Florentine painters in particular frequently represented themselves as spectators at the periphery of narrative scenes, set slightly apart from the principal actors, and looking outward to engage the viewer. In *De pictura*, Alberti recommends that a figure should be included in an *istoria* that beckons the viewer either through their gesture or gaze, advice that is echoed in his concluding remarks, in which he immodestly enjoins painters to include his own portrait in their *istorie* in order to

[13] The figure has been identified alternatively as Willibald Pirckheimer and as Konrad Peutinger, a humanist from Augsburg; however, any firm identification remains inconclusive; Lübbeke 2006, p. 26.

[14] For the pictorial tradition of the "witness" self-portraits, see Woods-Marsden 1998, ch. 4, "The Florentine Artist as Witness in Religious Narrative;" see also Brown 2000, pp. 57ff. Self-portraits could be incorporated into paintings and sculpture through various guises, many of which took the form of *trompe l'oeil*, see Ames-Lewis 2000, ch. 10, "Self-Portraiture."

commemorate him.[15]

Although the practice of signing religious works either through inscription (which frequently appeared on the frame) or self-portraiture had begun as a pious gesture, by the late fifteenth century, the conspicuous ingenuity with which signatures were incorporated into the images themselves suggests that aspects of self-representation were also at play. The significance of portrait signatures is undoubtedly multi-valent and unique to each painting; in short, it suffices to say that they were almost always intended in varying measures as signs of authorship, self-commemoration, and self-promotion.[16] Dürer, however, is unusually insistent in ensuring his identification. Not only does he stand apart from the main grouping, but he also holds a sheet of paper inscribed "*Exegit quinque / mestri spatio Albertus / Dürer Germanus* (Albrecht Dürer of Germany executed [this] in the space of five months)," explicitly proclaiming his authorship.[17] It is an uncommon synthesis of two separate traditions: the spectator self-portrait and the *cartellino*, a method used frequently by Northern Italian painters to sign paintings of all genres in which a piece of paper bearing the painter's name appears as part of the fictional image or seems to be appended to it as a *trompe l'oeil*.[18] By combining these devices, however, Dürer altered the way they

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[15] Book II, ch. 42, in Alberti/Grayson 1972, p. 83; Book III, ch. 63, in Alberti/Grayson 1972, pp. 106.

[16] Woods-Marsden 1998, ch. 1, "Self-Fashioning in Life and Art." See also Fortini Brown 1988, pp. 232-34, for the "testimonial function" such self-portraits served in Venetian confraternity paintings.

[17] Cf. Lübbeke 2006, p. 23.

[18] The first known *cartellino* to be used in Italian painting appears in Fra Filippo Lippi's *Tarquinia Madonna* of 1437. The *cartellino* was introduced into Venetian painting by Andrea del Castagno in his frescoes in the S. Tarasio Chapel in S. Zaccari of 1442, and seems to have been adopted shortly thereafter by Jacopo Bellini and Andrea Mantegna. For the various strategies used by Venetian artists' to inscribe their signatures in painting, see Matthew 1998.

functioned. The *cartellino* no longer acts as a playful conceit that vacillates between real and fictive spaces thereby heightening the illusionism of the painting. Here, it becomes simply part of the painted image. Similarly, the spectator-portrait loses its subtle evocativeness as an interlocutory witness meant to engage the viewer from within the scene. Instead, he presents himself apart from the assembly before him, in effect, calling attention to his authorship, and thus to the fiction of the congregation before the viewer.

There are further details. On the *cartellino* Dürer disingenuously boasts of the speed with which he completed the painting, even though his correspondence with Pirckheimer reveals that the altarpiece had taken considerably longer to complete.[19] Dürer's exaggeration underscores his competitive drive to outdo his rivals. Speed was understood by both artists and spectators as a function of facility, or *sprezzatura* as Baldassarre Castiglione famously called it. Sixteenth-century commentators repeatedly stressed that the attainment of excellence must appear effortless and reminded their readers of how difficult it was to achieve. As Lodovico Dolce succinctly put it half a century later: "art is the hiding of art's presence."[20] Dürer, however, characteristically ensured that his "art" was not too well hidden. That Dürer's claims were meant to call attention to his effortless achievement is reinforced by the fact that he made similar claims in his contemporary *Christ among the Doctors* (fig. 40), a demonstration piece famed for its inventive, centripetal composition; a small slip of paper protruding from one of the books bears the date 1506, Dürer's monogram,

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[19] Crawford Luber 2005, pp. 118-21.

[20] Dolce/Roskill 2000, pp. 90-91: "La facilità è il principale argomento delle eccellenza di qualunche arte, e la più difficile a conseguire; & è arte nasconder l'arte." For this concept with regard to Dürer's *oeuvre*, see Koerner 1993, ch. 7, "The Divine Hand."

and the statement "Opus quinque dierum," declaring that the painting had been completed in only five days.[21] The rivalrous intent signalled by Dürer's signature in these two paintings must have been addressed to his fellow artists – and specifically to his Venetian antagonists in the case of the *Feast of the Rose Garlands* altarpiece – who would have had the technical knowledge and studio experience necessary to gauge the accomplishment.

There is one last telling detail: the depiction of a illusionistic fly, which appears to have settled upon the painting itself.[22] The fly was a well-known reference to the ancient tradition of *trompe l'oeil* pranks that painters played on unsuspecting patrons and rivals, as described by Pliny, and echoed in various iterations by later commentators.[23] In Filarete's unpublished *Trattato di architettura*, for example, he claimed that the young Giotto had painted flies that were so convincing as to cause his master Cimabue to try to brush them away with a rag (an anecdote that was also repeated by Vasari).[24] The device was not uncommon in Northern Italian painting of the late-fifteenth century; however, it was usually deployed on portraits and devotional images as opposed to an institutional, public painting.[25]

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[21] Bialostocki 1959.

[22] The fly appears over the Virgin's knee. Although the fly is no longer visible due to extensive losses of paint, it can be seen seventeenth-century copies; Kotková 2002.

[23] Pliny's famous anecdote revolves around the rivalry between Zeuxis and Parrhasios. He recounts that Zeuxis had painted grapes so realistic that birds mistook them for real grapes and tried to peck at them. Not to be outdone, Parrhasios invited Zeuxis to look at one of his paintings that was partially covered by a curtain. But when he went to pull the curtain back, he found that it was painted, to which he acknowledged his defeat: "I took in the sparrows, but you took in me." For this and other anecdotes on *trompe l'oeil* pranks, see Kris and Kurz 1979, pp. 61-71.

[24] Cf. Ames-Lewis 2000, p. 192. For Vasari's use of the fly *topos* with regard to its usage in antiquity and the Middle Ages, see Konečný 2006, pp. 43ff.

[25] For a survey of images with flies from Italy and the North, see Pigler 1967, pp. 47-50.

Although we should not exclude the possibility that the motif carried religious allusions,[26] Dürer's fly was surely a witty demonstration of his abilities of mimesis, which the artist himself was known to boast about on other occasions, and a nod to the recognized northern superiority when it came to illusionism.[27] The very fact of including a *trompe l'oeil* fly on an altarpiece – a *topos* of mimesis that would have been instantly recognizable both to his artistic peers and humanist observers – must be understood, at least in part, as a learned overture for viewers to contemplate the *virtuoso* realism for which he was widely renowned.

Dürer evidently achieved his goals. In his letter to Pirckheimer of 8 September 1506, he reports that the altarpiece had earned him "much praise" and that "everyone says they have never seen more beautiful colours," boasting that the doge and patriarch were among those who came to see it.[28] And in a subsequent letter, he immodestly declares that "there is no better Madonna picture in the land than mine: for all the painters praise it as the nobles

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[26] André Pigler interprets the fly iconographically with reference to contemporary religious texts, and argues that it had talismanic functions to ward off pestilence and death; Pigler 1967. However, as André Chastel argues, several paintings in which the fly is placed near the signature of the painter, or even on a *cartellino*, suggest that it must have been intended as a demonstration of artistic mastery; although he does add that moralizing nuances are not precluded; Chastel 1986. Norman Land nuances Chastel's reading of these flies, and suggests that such flies at once seems to belong within (or on) the illusion of the image, which has the effect of inscribing the viewer within a participatory engagement with the protagonists of the image, but at the same time calls attention to the painter's opus; Land 1996.

[27] Dürer's familiarity with Plinian *topoi* is confirmed in Joachim Camerarius's introduction to the Latin version of Dürer's *Four Books on Human Proportion*, which mentions the "*linea summae tenuitatis*," that is the ability to draw very thin lines. He tells of a supposed meeting between Giovanni Bellini and Dürer in which the Venetian painter asked to see the brush that Dürer used to paint curls of hair. Dürer produced a selection of regular brushes, and offered to demonstrate to the incredulous Bellini that a normal brush could produce the effect of a single hair. Bialostocki 1986/87, p.19.

[28] Dürer to Pirckheimer, 8 September 1506: "Item wißt, daß mein Tafel sagt sie wollt ein Dukaten drum geben, daß Ihrs sächt. Sie sei gut und schon von Farben. Ich hab groß Lob dordurch überkummen, aber wenig Nutz … Itz spricht Iderman, sie haben schooner Farben nie gesehen … Item der Herzog und der Patriarch haben mein Tafel auch gesehen;" quoted in Lange and Fuhse 1970, pp. 35-36; translated in Dürer/Conway 1958, pp. 54-56.

do."[29] He adds that since the unveiling of the altarpiece, he had received a lucrative offer from the Venetian government paying two thousand ducats, but that he refused it in order to return to Germany.[30] Much later in the century, the *Feast of the Rose Garlands* ranked among of the city's artistic treasures. Francesco Sansovino offered high praise the altarpiece in his *Venetia città nobillisima et singolare* (Venice, 1581), describing it as "*bellezza singolare, per disegno, per diligenze, per colorito*" ("of singular beauty, for its design, skill, and colour"), precisely the terms that Dürer had envisioned three quarters of a century earlier.[31]

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This sort of rivalrous commission that was at play in the Dürer's *Feast of the Rose Garlands* reached its pinnacle with the pair of altarpieces by Raphael and Sebastiano del Piombo – the *Transfiguration* (fig. 41) and the *Raising of Lazarus* (fig. 42) – that were ordered sometime in late 1516 by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, the future Clement VII, for the Cathedral of St Juste in his archiepiscopal see of Narbonne. Both paintings present narrative subjects. But whereas Sebastiano treated the *Lazarus* as a densely populated *istoria*, not unlike Raphael's

[29] Dürer to Pirckheimer, 23 September 1506: "Und wie Ihr Euch selbs wolgefallt, also gib ich mir hiemit auch zu verstehn, daß bessers Mariabild im Land nit sei. Wann all Künstner loben das, wie Euch die Herrschaft;" quoted in Lange and Fuhse 1970, p. 37; translated in Dürer/Conway 1958, p. 56.

[30] Dürer/Conway 1958, p. 56. The matter of the job offer is clarified much later in a letter written sometime in late 1524 addressed to the Town Council of Nuremberg regarding remuneration for interest on his investments, in which he recalls that the Venetian government had offered him a post as official painter to the Republic, which he declined. He writes that "nineteen years ago, the government of Venice offered to appoint me to an office and to give me a salary of two hundred ducats a year." Dürer/Conway 1958, pp. 131-32.

[31] Sansovino 2002, fol. 48v. Lodovico Dolce, however, was highly critical of Dürer's realism. No doubt fuelled by the proscriptive and often paranoid climate in the years leading up to Trent, he chastised Dürer's propensity to give his sacred subjects inappropriately modern clothes and "Germanic" features; Dolce/Roskill 2000, p. 121.

own recently completed altarpiece of the *Spasimo* (fig. 102), Raphael juxtaposed the Transfiguration at Mount Tabor on top with the synchronous episode of the Failure to Heal the Possessed Boy (in which the powerless apostles await Christ's return from the mountain) beneath, fusing together two narratively and visually disjunctive scenes. Although this completely unprecedented hybrid subject must have been iconographically motivated, Raphael's ingenious pictorial solution allowed him to present the manifestation of Christ's divinity as an "iconic" image while handling the temporal episode in the lower register as a dramatic narrative scene replete with passages of his celebrated *grazia*.[32]

The episode has become something of a chestnut in scholarship on Renaissance art: it was, irresistably, a high-stakes, fiercely contested battle fuelled by the ambitious, if not profligate, patronage of the papacy before the Sack. The persistent focus on the rivalry between Raphael and Michelangelo[33] has been complemented in more recent years with several excellent studies regarding the political context of the commissions as well as the devotional and theological significance of the *Transfiguration*, in particular (Sebastiano comes up short yet again).[34] Nevertheless, both paintings were understood to be works of art by their intended audience of critical viewers as is confirmed by the extant documents

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[32] Although it is often suggested that Raphael expanded the original subject of the *Transfiguration* in order to incorporate the narrative scene below as a means to best Sebastiano's narrative-heavy altarpiece, Josephine Jungić argues that it hardly seems likely that Raphael could have devised such a nuanced and original iconographic programme without the aid of advisors. Moreover, the thematic symmetry between the subjects of Raising of Lazarus and the Failure to the Heal the Possessed Boy suggests that the double subject of the *Transfiguration* was planned from the outset; Jungić 1998, p. 80.

[33] See, for example, Goffen 2002, pp. 246-55; Barbieri 2005; and, most recently, Vahland 2008.

[34] For political context of the altarpieces, see Reiss 1992, ch. 7, "The *Transfiguration* and the *Raising of Lazarus*;" Jungić 1998. For interpretations of the *Transfiguration*'s devotional function and meaning, see King 1982; Cranston 2003; Kleinbub 2008.

surrounding their execution and display, which discuss them almost exclusively in those terms. Little is, in fact, known regarding the origins or terms of the commission;[35] however, as the ample correspondence among members of Sebastiano's camp makes blatantly clear, it was understood by its participants as a competition in which the stakes were nothing less than artistic supremacy in Rome, with Sebastiano effectively acting as proxy for his ally and frequent collaborator, Michelangelo.[36] Although Sebastiano's painting was completed by the spring of 1519 and displayed in the Vatican palace by December – an event recorded by the Venetian chronicler, Marc'Antonio Michiel[37] – the *Raising of Lazarus* would not be dispatched until after it had been displayed alongside the *Transfiguration* in a form of *paragone*, the competitive discourse of comparison.[38] Sometime shortly after Raphael's

[35] The first reference to the commission appears in a letter of 19 January 1517 from Sebastiano to Leonardo Sellaio; Shearman 2003, doc. 1517/1. However, it is not known whether the two paintings were commissioned at the same time, or if, as Michael Hirst proposes, Cardinal Giulio had first contracted Raphael to produce one (or possibly both) of the altarpieces several months earlier before deciding to enlist Sebastiano; Hirst 1981b, pp. 66-67.

[36] The progress of both altarpieces is documented in a series of letters exchanged among Sebastiano, Sellaio, Domenico da Terranuova, and Michelangelo between 1517 and 1520. Although Raphael's views on the competition are not known directly, Sebastiano's letters regarding the commission are marked by an overarching enmity toward Raphael and the school of painters who worked in his large shop. Sebastiano's reports on Raphael's progress indicate that both parties viewed the dual commission in terms of competitive rivalry. On several occasions, he complains of Raphael's efforts to sabotage the competition – although one suspects a degree of paranoia and antagonism may have also been at play in his writings – variously accusing him of delaying tactics in order to profit from seeing Sebastiano's composition first as well as conspiring to have the *Raising of Lazarus* sent to France for framing. See, for example, Sebastiano's letter to Michelangelo of 2 July 1518, Shearman 2003, doc. 1518/51; and Domenico da Terranuova's letter to Michelangelo of [28] July 1518, Shearman 2003, doc. 1518/54.

[37] Marc'Antonio Michiel, diary entry of 18 December 1519: "Non tacerò questo, che la terza domenica dell'Advento maestro Sabastiano pittore messe una sua tavola, che gl'havea fatto per la chiesia catedrale di narbona ad instantia del Cardinale de' Medici, et era la resurretione di Lazaro; la pose in Palazzo, così rechiendendo il Papa, in l'antisala, ove la fu veduta con grande sua laude e favore, e di tutti e del Papa;" Shearman 2003, doc. 1519/64. The event is also recorded in letter from Sebastiano to Michelangelo of 29 December 1519; Shearman 2003, doc. 1519/67.

[38] Hirst 1981b, p. 69.

sudden death on 6 April 1520, at which time the *Transfiguration* must have been virtually complete, the two paintings were put on view in the Vatican consistory so that they could be viewed together before being sent to France.[39]

Although both paintings were well received, so overwhelming was the acclaim for the *Transfiguration* – doubtless amplified by the fevered pitch of public mourning as well as the realization that the supply of Raphael's paintings had come to an abrupt halt – that Giulio decided instead to keep the altarpiece in Rome, while the *Raising of Lazarus* was consigned to the remote Cathedral of Narbonne. According to Vasari, the *Transfiguration* was placed above Raphael's bier as he lay in state in his studio, where it stood as the "living" embodiment of the artist's life and work.[40] Then, sometime before 1522, the cardinal donated the painting to the nearby church of S. Pietro in Montorio to serve as the high altar.[41] There, the *Transfiguration* became a prime attraction for admirers and students of Roman painting.[42] Elsewhere Vasari mentions that after Giulio was elevated to the papal throne he commissioned a copy of the *Transfiguration* from Gianfrancesco Penni to be dispatched to

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[39] Sebastiano to Michelangelo, 12 April 1520: "Et avisovi come hozi ho portato la mia tavola un'altra volta a Palazo, con quella che ha facto Rafaello, et non ho havuto vergogna;" Shearman 2003, doc. 1520/26.

[40] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 746.

[41] According to Vasari, the *Transfiguration* was kept in the Cardinal's palace before being transferred to S. Pietro in Montorio; Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, p. 144. Reiss 1992, p. 321, however, notes that there is no corroborating evidence that the altarpiece ever stood in the Cancelleria.

[42] In the 1540s, Michelangelo Biondo (*Della nobilissima pittura*, Venice 1549) and the Anonimo Gaddiano (Biblioteca Nazionale di Fiorenza, MS Magl. XVII, 17) exhorted young painters in Rome to study from the *Transfiguration*; Shearman 2003, doc. 1545/8, doc. 1549/6. See also Polidoro Papera's letter to Gianluca Benedetto Ebolitano advising him to copy all aspects of the *Transfiguration*; Shearman 2003, doc. 1544/1.

Narbonne in its place.[43] Giulio's decision to send the copy in place of the original is perhaps the earliest known instance of a practice that would become widespread in the seventeenth century, as will be discussed further in the Chapter 5. Although both paintings ultimately fulfilled the same function – as altarpieces in churches – Giulio clearly valued the original altarpiece, not for its content, which was identical in Penni's high-quality replica, but for its status among Raphael's most celebrated works. While the subject matter and style of the *Transfiguration* was nevertheless exemplary on religious grounds (it would weather the full storm of the Counter Reformation without sustaining any criticism of its undeniable artifice), its clear appeal to connoisseurial audiences hints at the processes of secularization already in motion that would impinge on the liturgical role of altarpieces in the decades to follow.

II. Diplomatic Gifts

The dual commission of the *Transfiguration* and the *Raising of Lazarus* was not simply a contest between two rival painters: the altarpieces also served the interests of their patron, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici.[44] Giulio had been appointed archbishop of Narbonne in February 1515 in order to promote peace between Giulio's cousin, Pope Leo X, and the new French king, Francis I. Following the French victory over the papacy at Marignano on 14 September 1515, Leo X, who had fought in league with England and Spain, moved to bring France back into the papal fold and undertook secret meetings with Francis at Bologna

[43] For Penni's painting (now in the Prado), see Gardner von Teuffel 1987, pp. 39-40.

[44] The most comprehensive study of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici's life and patronage remains Reiss 1992.

in December.[45] The alliance was ratified with the Concordat of Bologna on 18 August 1516; the commission for Narbonne, which followed shortly thereafter, was surely intended to mark the event. Such a high profile commission would have promoted the Franco-Medicean alliance and its shared aspirations to the pan-European audience of diplomats and ecclesiastics concentrated in Rome.[46] The orchestrated viewings of the altarpieces ensured the front-end impact of the commission as well, in which the learned audience of elite viewers would certainly have discussed the thematic aspects of the two altarpieces as they debated their pictorial merits. By engaging the most sought after artists in Rome in a bitterly contested rivalry, and paying them unprecedented fees – Raphael's fee of 1079 ducats would not be surpassed in the sixteenth century – Giulio was able to generate considerable excitement surrounding his gift to Narbonne all the while demonstrating his social and political clout.[47]

Research into cultural diplomacy is a relatively new concern in art history, and as expected, scholars engaged with the subject have taken a critical eye to past scholarship.[48] Charges of positivism take issue with the emphasis that has been placed on patronage and *collezionismo* in studies of diplomatic art, which, it is argued, has the effect of favouring the goals of the recipient at the expense of the real political dialogue that was embedded in the

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[45] Knecht 1994, ch. 4, "Marignano and After (1515-19);" Rohlmann 2002.

[46] Without delving too heavily into iconographic specifics, it suffices to point out that both altarpieces portray episodes of healing that convey a message of Christian renewal while also specifically evoking the Medici namesake through the theme of *Christus Medicus* – a leitmotif of Leo X's reign. On the *Christus Medicus* as Medici metaphor, see Shearman 1972, pp. 75-78.

[47] Sebastiano was paid 850 ducats for the *Raising of Lazarus*. Most altarpieces cost less than one hundred ducats, with only a handful exceeding two hundred ducats; O'Malley 2005b, pp. 132-33.

[48] For a useful overview of recent research on art and diplomacy, see in Cropper 2000b.

exchange of artworks.[49] Certainly the relationship between gift-giver and recipient carries with it an entirely different array of issues apart from self-directed practices of patronage and collecting; the question of political contexts, which places a premium on iconography and interpretation, presents a rich, but not necessarily superior, avenue of inquiry. These approaches can complement each other, however, when one considers the question of what made something suitable as diplomatic art. For however the work was intended or the exchange was negotiated, the efficacy of diplomatic art depended on the recipient's own investment in collection formation.[50] Anthony Colantuono, whose scholarship falls firmly on the side of the political functionality of diplomatic art, similarly stresses the need to identify "what is unique or characteristic about artworks produced, exchanged or deployed in the context of diplomatic negotiations."[51]

Although we have very little evidence whether such gifts ever had any discernable impact on political outcomes, gift-giving was adapted to the emerging practices of "modern" diplomacy during the fifteenth century as part of the etiquette of political alliances – that is, as overtures to negotiation, and as part of the ongoing maintenance and outward communication of goodwill.[52] Gifts were meant to stand outside of market-based economies of exchange;

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[49] See for example Cropper 2000, Colantuono 2000. Marc Smith takes specific aim at Janet Cox-Rearick's studies of the diplomatic art received by Francis I (see Cox-Rearick 1994), which he argues favours "a vision of the French monarch as an 'art collector,' not as a participant in a political dialogue consisting of the exchange of gifts;" Smith 1996, pp. 27-28. Smith's criticism, however, does not take into account that the proper object of Cox-Rearick's studies is the formation of his collection through various means of acquisition, including diplomacy.

[50] Cf. Falguières 1988, p. 232.

[51] Colantuono 2000, p. 52.

[52] The classic study on the development of "modern" diplomacy in the Renaissance is Mattingly 1955. For uses of diplomatic art in fifteenth-century Florence, see Elam; among cardinals during the sixteenth

ideally, they were intended as objects singular to the relationship between donor and recipient, and thus of immeasurable worth.[53] In practical terms, such a gift might be something that was difficult for the recipient to procure and exclusive to the donor to give, thereby indelibly associating the gift with its donor. Art was ideally suited to these ends. Art could serve as a demonstration of taste implicating both giver and receiver, as a local cultural emblem, and as a highly customizable vehicle for flattering imagery and politically pointed content. In the *Libri delle virtù sociali* (Naples, 1498), the Neapolitan humanist Giovanni Pontano recounted King Alfonso V's admiration for a triptych of the *Annunciation* by Jan Van Eyck that he had received as a gift, advising his reader that taste was as persuasive as economic value when it came to the effectiveness of gifts.[54] As Pontano puts it, "sometimes art makes a gift acceptable."[55]

As the fame of central Italian and Venetian art spread throughout Europe, so did its currency for diplomatic gift-giving, especially among French dignitaries. The French invasions that began in 1494 under Louis XII not only gave them first-hand knowledge of recent artistic developments, but also whetted their appetite for Italian art. As recounted in

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century, see Falgières 1988, pp. 222-33; for gift-giving as a lubricant to social and political mobility in seventeenth-century Rome, see Warwick 1997.

[53] Alexander Nagel's discussion of gift-giving among sixteenth-century *spirituali* sheds light on this aspect of early modern gift culture. He explains that the usual interpretations of gift culture, which rely heavily on Marcel Mauss's still-influential study on gifts in "archaic" societies (*Essai sur le don: forme archaique de l'échange*, 1925), wrongly characterize gift-giving in terms of market-based economies, that is, as a form of two-way exchange and inducement to commensurate reciprocity. Rather, he argues that gifts resisted any system of exchange and were ideally objects of immeasurable value. The inability to pay back the gift, in turn, helped to foster a bond of submission and trust between the recipient and the donor and vice versa. Nagel 1997, pp. 651ff.

[54] Welch 2002.

[55] Pontano 1965, p. 117: "Nonnunquam etiam artificium ipsum commendat munera."

the previous chapter, Louis XII was so taken with Leonardo's already famous *Last Supper* in the refectory of S. Maria della Grazie that he sought to have it brought back to France. Even if the story is apocryphal, it nevertheless bespeaks the sudden and intense interest in Italian painting among the high-ranking diplomats, ecclesiastics, and French officials who were a mainstay in French-occupied Milan as well as Florence, which maintained persistent if volatile political ties with France.

The principal beneficiary of cultural diplomacy in the first half of the sixteenth century was Francis I, who had a voracious appetite for Italian paintings, sculptures, and antiquities.[56] He repeatedly tried to lure artists to France, but with the exception of Rosso and Primaticcio's decorative work on the Grande Galerie at Fontainebleau,[57] met with little success: only one painting can be traced to Andrea del Sarto's stay from 1518 to 1519;[58] and the aged Leonardo failed to produce any works from his arrival in August 1516 until his death in May 1519.[59] More effectively, he deployed a network of agents and merchants to secure works, often at an exorbitant premium.[60] Foremost among them was the notorious

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[56] On Francis's activities as a patron and collector, see, above all, Cox-Rearick 1995.

[57] For Rosso and Primaticcio at Fontainebleau, the principal study remains Béguin et al., 1972.

[58] This is the *Charity* now in the Louvre. Andrea del Sarto returned to Florence, squandered the money entrusted to him for the purchase of art, and never returned. Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 837.

[59] For Leonardo in France, see Cox-Rearick 1995, ch. 4, "Louis XII, Francis I and Leonardo da Vinci."

[60] For Francis's agents, see Adhémar 1954; Knecht 1994, pp. 439-48; Cox-Rearick 1995, pp. 74ff.; Smith 1996. For the prices charged by Francis's agents, Vasari notes that Giovanni Battista Puccini commissioned a "*Cristo morto*" and a "*Nostra donna*" from Andrea del Sarto for export to France, and later, that another Virgin had been commissioned on behalf of the king, noting that the merchant (presumably Puccini) received four times what he had paid for the painting; Vasari/DeVere1996, vol. 1, pp. 833-35. Vasari also mentions in the Life of Perugino that Bernardino de' Rossi commissioned a painting of St Sebastian (discussed below) for which he paid the artist one hundred gold ducats and then resold it to Louis XII for four hundred; Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 590.

republican, Battista della Palla, who took advantage of the Medici exile between 1527 and 1530 to amass antiquities, sculptures, and paintings for export to France.[61] His reputation arises from one of Vasari's more colourful (and specious) anecdotes recounting della Palla's attempt to seize the famed bedroom panels belonging to the exiled Medici ally, Pier Francesco Borgherini, which was thwarted by Borgherini's stalwart wife, Margherita, who denounced him as a despoiler in a sprawling invective.[62] While the anecdote surely represents Vasari's own sentiments regarding the export of Florence's artistic patrimony, in this respect, Vasari did not exaggerate. By his own count, della Palla had shipped more than forty crates of "paintings, sculptures, antiquities and other fineries" to France.[63] But even with della Palla's s considerable efforts, most desirable artworks and antiquities were simply beyond Francis's reach, despite his formidable political power.

This situation was not lost on Francis's prospective allies in Florence, Venice, and Rome. France's decisive victory at Marignano had established the new king as a force to be reckoned with in the European political landscape and a more pressing threat to Italy itself, and few were as experienced in the use of cultural diplomacy as the Medici. Although they were certainly not the first to make use of gifts of art, the Medici had been precocious in their use of art for diplomatic ends, aided in no small part by the growing reputation of Florentine

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[61] On della Palla's activities as an art dealer during the Medici exile, see De La Coste-Messelière 1965; Elam 1993; Cox-Rearick 1995, pp. 82-88.

[62] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, pp. 351-52. In the Life of Andrea del Sarto, Vasari instead attributes della Palla's failure to acquire the paintings to the fact that they were affixed to the furnishing in such a way as to prevent their easy removal, thus indicating that the story about Margherita Borgherini's oration was, at the very least, heavily embellished; Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 835.

[63] Battista della Palla to Filippo Strozzi, [1529]: "Sopra 40 casse di pitture, sculpture, antichaglie et altre gentilezze mandate a Marsilia;" Elam 1993, doc. 20.

painting across Europe in the fifteenth century.[64] Thus, when Lorenzo de' Medici travelled to France in the spring of 1518 for the baptism of the dauphin, which coincided with his own marriage to the king's cousin, Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, Leo X sent along nothing less than two large altarpieces by Raphael: the *St Michael Slaying the Devil* (fig. 43) and the *Holy Family of St Francis* (fig. 44), along with a modestly sized *St Margaret* and a *Portrait of a Lady*, both attributed Giulio Romano (fig. 45).[65]

Lorenzo had already sent a traditional gift of his own marriage portrait, which he also commissioned from Raphael.[66] The gifts he was to present in France on behalf of Leo X, however, were devised to appeal to the king's personal interests: the largest of the three, the *St Michael*, depicts the traditional protector of the French kings; the celebratory *Holy Family* alludes to the birth of the dauphin; while the *St Margaret* was surely meant to honour his sister, the famously devout, Marguerite d'Angoulême of Navarre. The *St Michael*, accordingly, was the most important painting of the gift, and indeed the bulk of correspondence deal with its completion. The subject was of special relevance to Francis,

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[64] For the Medici's use of art as diplomatic gifts, especially during the fifteenth century, see Elam 1987/88; Warnke, pp. 52ff.

[65] For these paintings, see Sylvie Béguin in *Raphaël dans les collections françaises* 1983, no. 9-12, pp. 90-101; Cox-Rearick 1994; Cox-Rearick 1995, no. VI-2-5, pp. 201-17. Both the *St Michael* and the *Holy Family* are believed to have been executed in large part by Raphael, although workshop participation was a matter of course in Raphael's busy studio. Scholars generally agree that the *St Margaret* and *Portrait of a Lady* were painted by Giulio Romano based on compositions by Raphael. In his Life of Giulio Romano, Vasari claims that Raphael painted the head of the *Portrait of a Lady*, which, Béguin argues, is plausible. Cf. Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, pp. 118-19; Béguin, p. 100. It is significant, however, that the paintings are not mentioned in any of the documentation regarding the commission, suggesting that they were considered of lesser importance, and were more likely to have been painted by Romano.

[66] Cox-Rearick 1995, pp. 196-97.

who had undertaken two pilgrimages to Mont-St-Michel in 1518.[67] Although not a complex painting in iconographic terms, the image of the victorious saint vanquishing the demon is replete with thematic resonances and allusions – as an affirmation of spiritual triumph at a time of religious turmoil and as an expression of hope for a strengthened Church achieved by unity with France – that would have been meaningful to both donor and recipient.[68] But more than that, securing Raphael's services for such a large commission, and on such short notice, was a gesture that was exclusive to the pope. A series of letters between the aggrieved Duke Alfonso d'Este and Bertrando Costabili, his ambassador in Rome, attests to the fact that Raphael dropped all other obligations – including Alfonso's anxiously awaited painting of the Hunt of Meleager – in order to devote his energies to the task at hand.[69] It was an incomparable gift.

Diplomatic art encompassed all genres of painting – portraits, devotional images, altarpieces, religious *istoria*, mythologies, and even nudes were all sent to Francis I over the course of his thirty-two-year reign. But it is not immediately evident what type of painting the *St Michael* and *Holy Family* were meant to be. Throughout the ample correspondence between the secretaries of Leo X and Lorenzo de' Medici on the progress of the commission,

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[67] On Francis's devotion to St Michael, see Lecoq 1987, pp. 441ff.

[68] Janet Cox-Rearick suggests that *St Michael* alludes to the abolition of Pragmatic Sanction, symbolizing the triumphant union of Francis I and the Pope. She further argues that the painting also may have been intended to refer to the agreement as part of the Concordat of Bologna that France would embark on a new crusade against the Turks, in which the painting casts him as a defender of the church; Cox-Rearick 1995, p. 210.

[69] See especially the letters of 1 March 1518 and 13 August 1518. In Shearman 2003, doc. 1518/14, doc. 1518/58.

Raphael's paintings are simply referred to as "*pitture*" or "*quadri*."[70] The term *quadro*, which simply describes the rectangular format that had come to predominate in picture making, was a new and useful term that could be generally applied to any painting irrespective of function.[71] However, the vertical format, wood support, and large scale (the *St Michael* and the *Holy Family* are over two metres in height), which sets them apart from devotional religious images, strongly indicates that they were intended as altarpieces. Sylvie Béguin plausibly argues that the *St Michael* was first situated in the chapel of St-Michel at Amboise, where Louis XI had created the order of St Michael in 1469.[72] By the late 1530s, all four paintings were moved to the newly completed château at Fontainebleau, at which time they were restored by Primaticcio.[73] Once at Fontainebleau, the *St Michael* was probably installed in the king's personal apartments due to the fact that, unlike the other paintings, it was seldom copied. The *Holy Family*, according to Vasari, had been installed in the "king's Chapel."[74] Its location is confirmed in Père Dan's *Trésor des merveilles de la maison Royale de Fontainebleau* (Paris, 1642), which mentions a copy of the painting on the high altar of

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[70] Progress on the commission was closely monitored by Medici agents, as documented in the frequent reports exchanged between Baldassarre Turini and Goro Gheri, the secretaries of Leo X and Lorenzo de' Medici, respectively; Cox-Rearick 1995, pp. 203-05.

[71] A thoroughgoing account of the usage of the word *quadro* as it relates the origins of the work of art, however, remains to be written. For a brief discussion of these terms, see Ferino Pagden 1990, p. 167; Nagel 2003, p. 332; O'Malley 2005b, p. 28.

[72] *Raphaël dans les collections françaises* 1983, p. 91.

[73] The record appears in a ledger dated 1537-40: "A Francisque de Boullongne, paintre, la somme de 11 liv., pour avoir vacqué durant le mois d'octobre à laver et nettoyer le vernis à quatre grands tableaux de paintures apartenant au Roy, de la main de Raphaël d'Urbin, assavoir: le Sant Michel, la Sainte Marguerite, et Sante Anne et le portrait de la vice-reyne de Naples;" Shearman 2003, doc. 1540/2.

[74] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, p. 119.

the Royal Chapel that can safely be presumed to have taken the place of the original.[75] Nothing is known of the original location of the *St Margaret*.

Even as new genres of painting emerged in the sixteenth century, altarpieces were still an especially prestigious category of painting well suited for diplomatic purposes. But what mattered more than their intended functions was that the paintings for Francis I were original inventions by Raphael. As Patricia Rubin points out, most of the altarpieces Raphael completed in Rome were, in fact, made for other cities, as veritable exports of "*virtù*."[76] Indeed, the ambiguity of the genre of the paintings for Francis I is not simply a matter of terminology, but arises from the paintings themselves. The single-figure panel of a saint was an uncommon (although not unknown) format at a time when *sacre conversazioni* and narrative subjects dominated altarpiece production, while the iconography of the *Holy Family* is more suggestive of a domestic devotional painting. But it should also be noted that Raphael enjoyed considerable freedom in carrying out the commission. Although he clearly received instructions regarding subject matter, Raphael was not bound by a restrictive contract. Nor did he have to account for the usual exigencies of site or adhere to local models of iconography or composition as had been the case when he worked for the nuns at Monteluce. In fact, the only specification mentioned in the correspondence on Raphael's progress was that the paintings be "so well done that they will stand up to scrutiny and bear comparison to any other work."[77] This is not to say, however, that Raphael failed to consider

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[75] For the location of the *Holy Family*, see Béguin in *Raphaël dans les collections françaises* 1983, p. 93; Cox-Rearick 1995, pp. 206-07.

[76] Rubin 1990, p. 174.

[77] Baldassarre Turini to Goro Gheri, 27 March 1518: "El quadro di S.to Michele et della nostra Donna

his recipient. Raphael possessed a highly attuned sense of decorum along with a deft ability to adjust his "style" as the subject and patron demanded it.[78]

The altarpieces for Francis I are characterized by a decidedly elegant aesthetic. The *St Michael* is an exemplar of male beauty, a virtual essay in Raphael's famed *grazia*, while the Madonna of the *Holy Family* is crowned by an angel plucked directly from the bawdy nuptial banquet pictured in the *Marriage of Cupid and Psyche* painted for Agostino Chigi's Villa Farnesina in 1519. That the appearance of the paintings may have been devised to appeal to Francis's tastes as a collector is suggested in a well known letter from Sebastiano to Michelangelo written on 2 July 1518, in which he mocks Raphael for using an uncharacteristically dark, "Leonardesque" palette, which he expects will displease the French.[79] Notwithstanding the fact that Sebastiano had egregiously underestimated his rival, as David Summers argues, Raphael's use of *chiaroscuro* was more likely a form of deliberate artifice – a "construction of contrast" modelled on Ciceronian ideals of rhetorical ornament – that was meant to appeal to the sensibilities of discerning viewers.[80] Light hits the saint's

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... saranno sì belle figure et tanto bene adorne che reggeranno al martello et al paragone con qualunche altra figure si sia et faranno honore a S. Ex.a.;" Shearman 2003, doc. 1518/18.

[78] For similar arguments regarding the purposeful relation between decorum and style with regard to Titian's religious paintings, see Roman D'Elia 2005.

[79] Sebastiano del Piombo to Michelangelo, 2 July 1518: "Io non vi dirò altro che pareno figure che siano state al fumo, o vero figure de ferro che luceno, tutte chiare et tutte nere, et desegnate al modo ve dirà Leonardo. E pensatte come le cosse vanno; dua bravi hornamente recette da' Francesi;" Shearman 2003, doc. 1518/51; translated in Cox-Rearick 1995, p. 205.

[80] For Raphael's use of *chiaroscuro* and the use of *contrapposto* as ornament, see Summers 1977, pp. 352ff. For more on Raphael's use of rhetorical strategies in his painting, see Rubin 1990. Alternatively, Kathleen Weil-Garris Posner 1974, p. 56, proposes that the dark tonalities may have been intended to mimic Leonardo's "*maniera oscura*," in order to appeal to Francis's tastes; however, such dark tonalities were not uncommon toward the end of Raphael's career. Cf. Hall 1992, pp. 131-36; Van Eikema Hommes 2000. It should be noted, however, that the present dark colour of the *St Michael*, is

face and upper body sharply from the upper left, leaving most of the painting submerged in a lush palette of dark golds and blues. This sense of artful contrast is echoed in the figure of St Michael, in the feminized beauty of his features and the elegant *contrapposto* of his pose as he alights on the demon poised to strike with his spear.[81]

Although the expressive intent of such sophisticated devices was within the parameters of altarpiece design, the composition was promptly put to use for secular purposes as well. In September 1518, Raphael offered a cartoon of the *St Michael* painting to Alfonso in an effort to mollify him for the continuing delays in completing the mythologies, which had been commissioned four years prior.[82] Not wishing to cause offence to the original patron (and recipient), Raphael specified that no paintings were to be made from the cartoon in order to preserve the exclusivity of Leo's gift to the king.[83] If the function of the painting is ambiguous, the cartoon could only have been a collector's item.[84] Moreover, that such a

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due to the damaging effects of the corrosives used in order to transfer the painting from panel to canvas in 1751; Hoeniger 2011, pp. 116-28.

[81] The Renaissance ideal of the masculinized female/feminized male is expressed most clearly in a letter from Lodovico Dolce to Alessandro Contarini around 1554 or 1555 regarding Titian's *Venus and Adonis*: "E vedesi, che nell'aria del viso questo unico Maestro ha ricercato di esprimere certa gratiosa bellezza, che participando della femina, non si discostasse però dal virile: vuo dire, che in Donna terrebbe non so che di huomo, & in huomo di vaga donna: mistura difficile, aggradevole, e sommamente (se creder dobbiamo a Plinio) prezzata da Apelle;" Dolce/Roskill 2000, pp. 213-14. Fredrika Jacobs discusses these ideals of beauty (with reference to contemporary paintings and sculptures of male and female nudes) in the context of *contrapposto*, understood as merged – not simply counterpoised – opposites; Jacobs 2000.

[82] The paintings were to depict the *Hunt of Meleager* and the *Indian Triumph of Bacchus*. For Raphael's involvement in Alfonso d'Este's *camerino d'alabastro*, see Shearman 1987.

[83] Shearman 2003, doc. 1518/66, doc. 1518/68. By contrast, no such restrictions were placed on the other cartoon of the painting by Giulio Romano of *Giovanna d'Aragona*, which was also given to Alfonso; cf. Shearman 2003, doc. 1519/9.

[84] Cf. Bambach 1999, ch. 8, "The 'Substitute' Cartoon."

devout subject was an acceptable substitute for the intended Bacchic mythology for Alfonso's *studiolo* surely attests to the bleeding between religious and secular genres already well established by the 1510s.

A similar secularizing shift is also evident in documents concerning other altarpieces sent to France around that time. In 1517, the Venetian Senate commissioned a new altarpiece of *Sts Michael, George, and Theodore* by Titian to be sent to the French general and governor of Milan, Odet de Foix, the vicomte of Lautrec, in gratitude for retaking Brescia and Verona from Spain in January 1517.[85] A fragmentary panel bearing the standing figure of St George (and the tip of the left wing of St Michael; fig. 46), now in the Cini collection in Venice, is all that remains of the altarpiece and indicates that it took the form of a single panel with the three standing saints. Although there are Florentine precedents, it was an unusual format in Venice suggesting that the iconography – three warrior saints including Michael and Theodore, the patron saints of France and Venice, respectively – was devised to flatter the Vicomte.[86] The altarpiece was but one item among an array of gifts valued at some eight thousand ducats that was sent to De Foix, but, significantly, it was put on display in the Doge's palace before being sent to Milan, an event recorded by the Venetian chronicler, Marin Sanudo.[87] The public display of the painting before its dispatch would seem to indicate a keen interest in the altarpiece and its artist. Titian's star was on the rise: he had

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[85] Cf. Hood and Hope 1977, p. 547, note 61 (with some reservations); Siebenhüner 1980; and Joannides 2001, pp. 285-88.

[86] See, for example, Antonio Pollaiuolo's altarpiece of *Sts Vincent, James, and Eustace* for the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal in S. Miniato al Monte, executed between 1466 and 1468.

[87] Sanuto 1879-1903, vol. 24, col. 303.

just returned from a sojourn at the Este courte in Ferrara and was likely already working on the Frari *Assumption* at that time. Unfortunately, there is no further record of the picture after its delivery to Lautrec in June 1517.

To commemorate the birth of the dauphin in 1518, the Venetians also commissioned an altarpiece from Sebastiano del Piombo, still known then as Sebastiano Veneziano and considered a native painter even though he had been based in Rome since 1510. The panel depicts the *Visitation*, a subject befitting the occasion of a royal birth (fig. 47).[88] After the painting was finished in early 1519, it too was put on display, in this instance, on a temporary altar in front of the Roman palace of the Venetian cardinal Marco Cornaro on the occasion of the procession of the Corpus Domini. Leonardo Sellaio described the event to Michelangelo, claiming that the painting's singular artistic accomplishment made it too good for export to France.[89] Marc'Antonio Michiel, who happened to be in Rome at the time in the service of Cardinal Francesco Pisani, also commented on the altarpiece, declaring it to be "a great feast for *judicious* eyes," a clear indication of the connoisseurial audience that the Venetian offering was intended to address even during a religious celebration.[90] Michiel referred to the *Visitation* as a "*quadro*," despite the fact that it was placed above a temporary altar at the

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[88] The painting was not sent to France until 1521 as indicated by the signature on the plinth (SEBASTIANVS VENETI FACIEBAT / ROMA MCXXI). For Sebastiano's *Visitation*, see Hirst 1981b, pp. 76-82; Cox-Rearick 1995, no. VI-7, pp. 222-23; Baker-Bates 2011.

[89] Leonardo Sellaio to Michelangelo, 23 October 1518: "Una chosa mirabile, tale che non chredo vadia in Franc[i]a, perché non fu mai visto simile opera;" Barocchi/Ristori 1965-84, doc. CCCLVII.

[90] Marc'Antonio Michiel, 9 July 1519 (emphasis mine): "Fu gran pasto agli occhi giudiziosi quel zorno uno quadro di mano di nostro Sebastiano pittore, posto sopra uno altare avanti la casa del Reverdissimo Cornaro, el cui argomento è la visitatione di Santa Maria et Santa Elisabetta, dono destinato ala Christianissima Regina di Franzia, et che averà a star sempre ne le sua camera;" quoted in Hirst 1981b, p. 76. For the use and understanding of "*giudizio*" in the context of the Renaissance discourse on art, see Summers 1981, 352-79.

time. But we can be sure that Michiel was deliberate in his meaning. For in a letter to his friend, Antonio di Marsilio, written several months earlier concerning the progress of Sebastiano's *Visitation*, he describes it as a "*palla*."[91] That is to say, he was not ignorant that the gift was an altarpiece, but in this context – the display of a diplomatic gift intended for export as an exemplum of Venetian painting – it was the painting's status as a work of art that took precedence. At the same time, there could have been little question for the recipients of the *Visitation* that the painting was categorically an altarpiece. It was eventually installed on the high altar of the Lower Chapel at Fontainebleau after its completion in 1545.

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The aesthetic response to altarpieces already evident by the end of the fifteenth century had engendered processes of "dislocation" in which some altarpieces performed extra-ecclesiastical roles as works of art – as competitive *dimostrazioni* or diplomatics gifts – all the while ostensibly functioning as liturgical devices. These were exceptional altarpieces that were occasioned within the parameters of exceptional circumstances. The notion of a dedicated space for the viewing of art, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4, did not exist in the early sixteenth century, but once it did, several of these altarpieces were promptly relocated there. By the end of the century, Raphael's *St Michael* and *Holy Family*, Giulio Romano's *St Margaret*, and Sebastiano's *Visitation* were all transferred by Henry IV to the newly formed picture gallery at Fontainebleau, the Cabinet des Peintures, where they were hung together along with other celebrated Italian paintings, including Leonardo's *Virgin of*

[91] Marc'Antonio Michiel to Antonio di Marsillio, 4 March 1519: "Sebastiano ha fornito la sua palla ache va in Franza et diebo fire doman a vederla;" quoted in Hirst 1981b, p. 276.

the Rocks which had since made its way into the French royal collections.[92] Around the same time, the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II acquired Dürer's *Feast of the Rose Garlands* and took it to his gallery Prague.[93] The integration of these altarpieces into newly formed picture galleries was, in effect, a ratification of their status as works of art. But while the altarpieces discussed above remained in churches or chapels for the remainder of the century, in our final case study, we shall see that the idea that artistically ambitious altarpieces might be better suited to a secular venue was already keenly felt by the 1520s.

III. Images of St Sebastian

I have thus far focused on exceptional altarpieces, in which demonstrable artistic virtuosity were required by the extra-liturgical needs of the commission. But even for "normal" commissions, it had become commonplace for painters to advertise their talents through such devices as artfully posed and foreshortened figures, learned references, quotations of other works of art, and conspicuous passages of grace and beauty. With artists claiming greater stylistic individuality and creative autonomy, their efforts to appeal to learned spectators sometimes challenged conventions of genre and religious decorum and even threatened to transgress the category of altarpiece altogether.

The most problematic altarpieces usually involved prominent nude figures. Many artists and humanists believed that the nude embodied a high-minded ideal of beauty, which,

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[92] Müntz 1885, p. 267. On the formation of the Cabinet des Peintures during the 1590s under Henry IV, see Cox-Rearick 1995, pp. 120-25. The paintings were recorded in the Cabinet des Peintures by the custodian of the collection of medals and antiquities at Fontainebleau, Rascas de Bagarris, in 1608, and by later by Cassiano da Pozzo during his visit to France in 1625.

[93] For the subsequent history of the painting in Prague, see Kotková 2006.

in turn, was considered the ultimate demonstration of artistic virtuosity. Certainly such attitudes were conditioned by the evidence of antique nude sculptures, which were viewed as canonical statements of artistic perfection.[94] As many scholars have pointed out the nude was not necessarily at odds with the goals of Christian art.[95] Obviously certain sacred personages called for the use of nudity. But nudity in religious art could be also justified on more universal grounds through neoplatonism, in which the male nude in particular was held as the perfect microcosmic embodiment of the cosmos, and its pictorial representation as the ideal instantiation of the artist's idea, itself a conduit of divine inspiration. Thus, the seemingly gratuitous *ignudi* in the Sistine Chapel, for example – each a virtuoso rendering of the heroic male nude – could be interpreted as iterations of Divine Order and as manifestations of Michelangelo's divinely inspired *ingegno*.[96] But even if Christian humanism could justify nudity in religious art, the fact that artfully posed nude figures also featured prominently among the new genres of secular painting conceived for the purposes of private delectation was surely cause for concern, especially among certain reform-minded observers who believed that religious art had already strayed too far from its vocation, a mounting crisis that will be discussed further in the following chapter.

The earliest, and arguably, the most notorious case of such a "transgressive" altarpiece concerns Fra Bartolommeo's lost *St Sebastian*, which was installed in S. Marco in Florence on one of the choir walls along with a pendant of *St Mark*, shortly after his return

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[94] On Renaissance attitudes toward ancient sculpture, see esp. Barkan 1999.

[95] The literature on neoplatonism in Renaissance art is vast; however, for a concise summation of the neoplatonic understanding of the nude, see Snow Smith 1998.

[96] Cf. Summers 1981, p. 69ff.

from Rome in 1514.[97] It is known today only through a half-size copy in S. Francesco at Fiesole (fig. 48) as well as Vasari's rather astonishing account of the painting's early history. The painting, Vasari tells us, was the Frate's first commission following a sojourn in Rome, during which time he had studied the recent achievements of Raphael and Michelangelo. His exposure to their works in Rome, it seems, provoked him to introduce a new monumentality and commitment to *all'antica* models to his work upon returning to Florence. Vasari explains:

> There he had been accused many times of not knowing how to paint nudes; for which reason he resolved to put himself to the test and to show by means of his labour that he was as well fitted as any other master for the highest achievements of his art. Whereupon, to prove this, he painted a picture of St Sebastian, naked, very lifelike in the colouring of the flesh, sweet in countenance, and likewise executed with corresponding beauty of person, whereby he won infinite praise from the craftsmen. It is said that, while this figure was exposed to view in the church, the friars found, through the confessional, women who had sinned at the sight of it, on account of the charm and melting beauty of the lifelike reality imparted to it by the genius of Fra Bartolommeo, for which reason they removed it from the church and placed it in the chapter-house, where it did not remain long before it was bought by Giovan Battista della Palla and sent to the King of France.[98]

The passage is all the more remarkable considering that the Dominican friar was famously pious; he consigned his own secular paintings to the Savonarolan bonfires in 1494, and later

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[97] On Fra Bartolommeo's lost *St Sebastian*, see Cox-Rearick 1974; *Età di Savonarola* 1996, pp. 122ff; Cornelison 2009.

[98] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 4, pp. 97-98: "E così se ne tornò a Fiorenza, dove era stato morso più volte, che non sapeva fare gli ignudi. Volse egli dunque mettersi a pruova, e con fatiche mostrare ch'era attissimo ad ogni eccellente lavoro di quella arte come alcuno altro. Laonde per prova fece in un quadro un San Sebastiano ignudo con colorito molto alla carne simile, di dolce aria e di corrispondente bellezza alla persona parimente finito, dove infinite lode acquistò appresso a gli artefici. Dicesi che stando in chiesa per mostra questa figura, avevano trovato i frati nelle confessioni, donne che nel guardarlo s'erano corrotte per la leggiadra e lasciva imitazione del vivo datagli dalla virtù di fra' Bartolomeo; per il che levatolo di chiesa, lo misero nel capitolo, dove non dimorò molto tempo che da Giovan Battista della Palla, comprato, si mandò al Re di Francia;" translated in Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 676.

renounced painting altogether for several years after entering the Dominican order in 1500.[99] Following his return to painting in 1504 he became renowned for the solemn restraint of his religious paintings, which epitomized the devout style commonly associated with the convent of S. Marco.[100] Although Vasari's account of the reception of the *St Sebastian* seems outrageous, we do know that the painting was, in fact, sold by the convent in 1529 and subsequently acquired by Francis I by 1532.[101] It was an extremely unusual practice in the early sixteenth century that any church would offload its sacred art to a collector, and suggests that unusual mitigating circumstances may have played a roll.

Recent and dramatic developments in the pictorial tradition of St Sebastian lend further credence to Vasari's account. As a popular plague saint, images of St Sebastian had become an increasingly common fixture in church interiors in the wake of the Black Death, and were frequently incorporated in *sacra conversazione* altarpieces.[102] But over the course of the fifteenth century, representations of the saint focused less on his martyrdom than on his depiction as an idealized, youthful nude. This reorientation was possibly a means of thematizing his miraculous triumph over death in order to emphasize his apotropaic power as

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[99] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 672-73.

[100] For the so-called "scuola di San Marco," see the essays in *Éta di Savonarola* 1996; and Franklin 2001, ch. 5, "Fra Bartolomeo, the School of San Marco and the Dominican Manner."

[101] Cox-Rearick 1974, p. 334. Alternatively, Sally Cornelison posits that the *St Sebastian* is the painting mentioned in a bookkeeping record of 1520 regarding the purchase of a cover to protect an unnamed painting by Fra Bartolommeo from a leak and suggests that the *St Sebastian* was removed simply due to water damage. But such an effort to protect the painting in question would not be required if the painting was to be sold off, nor does this hypothesis take into account the highly unusual circumstances of the sale of the *St Sebastian* to the French King; Cornelison 2009, pp. 326-27.

[102] For the pictorial tradition of St Sebastian, see Marshall 1994.

a sacrificial intercessor against plague and other diseases.[103] But it also seems that artists were cognizant of the opportunities that such a noble and heroic subject provided for demonstrations of artistry. Andrea Mantegna notably produced at least two independent paintings of the saint in the late fifteenth century. In each, the saint is tied to a column among Classical ruins, which are delineated with his characteristic archaeological precision. In the earlier Vienna *St Sebastian* (fig. 49),[104] Mantegna's epigraphic signature, which is engraved in Greek along the pier to read "Work of Andrea," is an unmistakable signal meant to communicate his antiquarian expertise to a learned audience.[105] The much larger Louvre *St Sebastian* (fig. 50) is in many ways a refinement of the earlier work, featuring a softer, and more naturalistic depiction of the saint and landscape and a more sophisticated and robust treatment of the architectural elements, which have become so prominent as to threaten to overwhelm the image of the saint himself.[106] One detail, however, occurs in both works: a sculptural fragment of a foot shod in a Roman sandal, which is placed quite purposefully alongside the saint's own foot in the later painting. The sculptural foot, manifestly significant due to its repetition in the second painting, was likely an allusion to Classical canons of proportion as described in Vitruvius's *De architectura*, and revived in the Renaissance in Alberti's *De statua*, texts with which Mantegna would have been intimately

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[103] Marshall 1994, pp. 496ff.

[104] The painting is dated to the late 1450s or early 1460s on stylistic grounds. Nothing, however, is known of the circumstances of its production. Lightbown 1986, no. 10, p. 408.

[105] Mantegna inaugurated the "archaeological" signature in the Renaissance. Mantegna did not actually know Greek, which makes the signature an especially self-conscious intellectual statement; Chambers, Martineau, and Signorini 1992. For a survey of subsequent epigraphic signatures, see Perrot 1974.

[106] The painting has been dated to the early 1480s on stylistic grounds. Lightbown suggests that its large size suggests that it may have been an altarpiece. Lightbown 1986, no. 22, pp. 420-21.

familiar.[107] The disparate sizes of the two images – the small dimensions of the former making it better suited to a domestic environment, the latter more likely belonging to a public context, possibly as an altarpiece panel – precludes drawing any firm conclusions about function and viewership. Nevertheless, it is clear that such motifs as the signature, the architecture, and the sculptural fragments would have been intended as erudite meditations on the material and textual remains of antiquity.[108]

Fra Bartolommeo's *St Sebastian*, however, was a *dimostrazione* of a different sort.[109] On this matter Vasari's account is again plausible. In 1522 (almost contemporary with the events at S. Marco), Paolo Giovio similarly claimed that in painting only "pleasant renditions of clothed and armed figures," Lorenzo Costa was happy to settle for "less demanding pursuits," rather than to risk his reputation by failing in the depiction of nude figures, which critics demanded because they were a "harder test of art."[110] But regardless if the Frate's *St*

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[107] Cf. Freedman 1998, pp. 12-13.

[108] For the appeal of Mantegna's St Sebastian to learned viewers, see Freedman 1998. Joan Caldwell posits a more strictly religious interpretation of the paintings based on an iconographic reading informed by Mantegna's final version of the subject (Venice, Ca d'Oro), which was still in his studio at the time of his death in 1506; Caldwell 1973. This last version, however, is in fact characterized by a more overtly religious sentiment: many more arrows pierce the saint, who stands in a stark setting with none of the allusive elements featured in the first two paintings. I believe the substantial pictorial and thematic differences between the Louvre and Version panels and the Ca' d'Oro *St Sebastian* serve to strengthen a humanistic reading of the earlier paintings.

[109] This does not preclude the possibility that the painting might sustain a more sincerely devotional reading congruent with Fra Bartolommeo's own spiritual beliefs; however, my focus is on the way the painting was apprehended by certain connoisseurially minded audiences. David Freedberg takes Vasari at his word and ultimately characterizes the removal of the *St Sebastian* as an early example by which the processes of art history render images anodyne. I do not believe, however, that Freedberg sufficiently allows for the possibility that the altarpiece may have been conceived within an "art historical" framework; Freedberg 1989, p. 346.

[110] Giovio 1999, pp. 261-63: "Mantuanus Costa suaves hominum effigies, decentes compositosque gestus blandis coloribus pingit; ita ut vestitae armataeque imagines a nemine iucundius exprimi posse iudicentur: verum periti censores non velata magis quam nuda, graviore artis periculo, ab eo desiderant,

Sebastian was undertaken with the specific intent to counter criticisms, it is clear that he took the challenge of portraying the male nude very much to heart; the painting is especially unusual in his *oeuvre* compared to contemporary works such the pendant painting of *St Mark* (fig. 51), which are characterized by a distinctive sobriety and monumentality. Rather the full-length figure, who stands sheathed in a diaphanous loin cloth, poses with a studied grace. In contrast to the pictorial tradition of the saint, he is not tethered to a tree or column but appears to stride out of a fictive, classical niche. The effect created by this niche gives the figure the appearance of sculpture; indeed his pose quite likely was derived from Jacopo Sansovino's recent *Bacchus*.[111]

The fact that Fra Bartolommeo's *St Sebastian* was imitated in other Florentine images of St Sebastian during the decade or so that it was on display in Florence suggests that the altarpiece did enjoy some measure of critical success at least.[112] But it is worth stressing that these contemporary adaptations of Fra Bartolommeo's *St Sebastian* tempered the more unusual aspects of the original: in a Florentine altarpiece from the circle of Bacchiacca (fig. 52), the saint is situated instead within a traditional *sacra conversazione*; and in independent images of the saint, such as Giuliano Bugiardini's large canvas (fig. 53), the figure is depicted in a contextualizing landscape setting, thus neutralizing the classicizing

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quod facile praestare non potest, quum certiores dicsciplinas ad picturae usum remissioribus studiis contentus conferre nequiverit;" translated in Romano 1994, p. 439. For a discussion of the passage, see also Franklin 2001, p. 5.

[111] Cox-Rearick suggests that Vasari's account of the response of the women was likely embellished and that the removal was rather prompted by the painting's unmistakable resemblance to Sansovino's pagan *Bacchus*, which itself was adapted from ancient prototypes; Cox-Rearick 1974, p.351.

[112] For the influence of Fra Bartolommeo's *St Sebastian* on other Florentine paintings of the subject, see Cox-Rearick 1974, pp. 352-53.

aspect of the original.[113] These "corrections" suggest that even admiring artists recognized that the prototype erred in imitating antique statuary too closely for a church setting. This response to the *St Sebastian* is echoed in Vasari's account of the Frate's supposedly unsuccessful trip to Rome. Like other painters, sculptors, and architects of the day, he had journeyed to Rome to study its "marvels" – both ancient and modern – but found himself "bewildered" by what he saw there.[114] It is possible to imagine that Fra Bartolommeo's failure at S. Marco was due to his apparent incomprehension of the *all'antica* classicism of Michelangelo's nude figures that he would have seen in Rome, a type he nevertheless felt pressured to adopt upon his return to Florence.[115]

Perhaps the most extraordinary detail in Vasari's account is that the painting was bought by Francis I for his private collection. This is confirmed by contemporary documents. Both Vasari and the Anonimo Magliabecchiano plausibly report that the painting had been first removed to the chapter-house, that is, away from public view. The painting was acquired on 4 February 1529 for a mere twenty ducats by Tommaso Sartini, a Florentine merchant in Lyon, who then sold it to the king by 1532 for the extortionate sum of three hundred *scudi*.[116] If the *St Sebastian* was almost worthless to the friars as a religious image, it was immensely valuable to someone with a penchant for the finest Italian paintings. While

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[113] Cox-Rearick 1974, pp. 352-53; *Leonardo, Michelangelo* 2005, no. 28, pp. 124-25.

[114] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 676.

[115] I would like to thank Philip Sohm for this apt suggestion.

[116] An entry in the ledgers of the Convent of S. Marco records the sale of the painting to Sartini (Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Convento di S. Marco 103, no. 55, Libro Debitori e Creditore). Later, the sale of the painting to the King of France is mentioned in a letter of 2 January 1532 from Antonio Mini to Michelangelo. For these documents Cox-Rearick 1974, p. 334.

we cannot entirely rule out the possibility that Fra Bartolommeo's *St Sebastian* painting would have been valued for its apotropaic subject, given Francis's reputation as a collector, its primary value must have been as a work of art. Francis I had long been interested in acquiring works from the Frate, who had declined an invitation from Francis I to come to Fontainebleau sometime in 1515.[117] He may have been known to Francis through such works as the *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine*, which had been given in 1512 by the Florentine Signoria, to the French ambassador, Jacques Hurault, Bishop of Autun, as well as the altarpiece commissioned around 1511 by the ambassador to the papal court, Ferry Carondelet, the archdeacon of Besançon, for his diocesal cathedral.[118] Antonio Mini, who reported on the sale of the *St Sebastian* to Michelangelo, exclaims that "there was never a lord who delighted in it more than the king," before further noting that the many members of the French royal court were keen to procure paintings and sculptures for the king.[119]

Although there is no further testimony of the painting following its removal to France, it is tempting to imagine that it would have been displayed alongside Perugino's *St Sebastian* (fig. 54) where the two could have been compared. Perugino's version presumably had been acquired by Francis's predecessor, Louis XII.[120] The figure of the saint was an almost exact

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[117] Cox-Rearick 1995, pp. 161-62.

[118] For the *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine*, see Fischer 1981, pp. 167-68; for the Ferry Carondelet altarpiece, see *Fra Bartolommeo* 1990, pp. 235-51.

[119] Antonio Mini to Michelangelo, 2 January 1532: "Somi trovanto con Tomaso Sartini, è quale conperrò quello San bastiano che fece è Frate di San Marco, e diciemi che Regnie dete inscundi trenciento 300 d'oro, e che no fu mai singniore nesuno che se ne diletasi tanto quanto fa questo Re, e tunta la sua corte fa così, in modo che non atendano ad altro che anconperare pinture e inscunture;" quoted in Cox-Rearick 1974, p. 334.

[120] The painting has since been lost, but given Perugino's tendency to repeat figures, it almost certainly closely resembled another version of the subject now in the Louvre. The fact that an early sixteenth-

replica of that in his altarpiece of an *Madonna Enthroned with St John the Baptist and St Sebastian* done for the church of S. Domenico in Fiesole of 1493 (fig. 55).[121] According to Vasari, Perugino's *St Sebastian* had been commissioned by the enterprising merchant Bernardino de' Rossi for one hundred *scudi*, who then sold it to Louis XII for four hundred ducats.[122] Perugino, as per his usual practice, had simply re-used the same drawing to create the new painting. But in another sense, singling out the figure of St Sebastian from the rest of the *sacra conversazioni* effectively extracted the demonstrably "artistic" element from the rest of the altarpiece. Perugino's *St Sebastian*, with his head tilted up and body gracefully exposed had an obvious appeal to awakening aesthetic sensibilities in a way that the accompanying figures of the Virgin and St John the Baptist did not.

IV. The Encroachment of Aestheticization

Perugino's *St Sebastians* – one a liturgical accessory, one a collector's item – help to inform our understanding of Titian's *Resurrection* altarpiece, which contains a figure of St Sebastian that is one of the most compelling demonstrations of virtuosity to be found in any Renaissance altarpiece (fig. 56). The altarpiece was commissioned in 1520 by Altobello Averoldi, the papal legate to Venice, for the Brescian church of SS. Nazaro e Celso.[123] It was

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century manuscript illumination in the *Grandes Heures d'Anne de Bretagne* by Jean Bourdichon dating to 1508 (Paris, Bib. Nat., inv. 9474) repeats the pose of the Louvre version seems to confirm that the painting owned by Louis XII also followed this figure type; Cox-Rearick 1995, pp. 177-78.

[121] Scarpellini 1984, no. 51, p. 86.

[122] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 590.

[123] For a general overview of the altarpiece and the circumstances of its commission, see Passamani 1991. For Altobello Averoldi, see Agosti 1991; Lucchesi-Ragni 1991.

to take the form of a traditional polyptych: the central panel depicts the resurrected Christ, flanked by separate panels of the Annunciation on the upper tier, and, on the lower register, the donor presented by the titular saints, Sts Nazarus and Celsus on the left, and the figure of St Sebastian on the right. Although the polyptych format was still prevalent in Lombardy, the Averoldi altarpiece was unusual in that Titian underscored the separateness of the individual panels. Rather than treating each panel as part of a unified and cohesive space, which would have been the expected solution, the individual compartments are rather spatially discontinuous in terms of the treatment of the light, landscape background, and cropping of the figures. Titian consciously side-stepped the pictorial conventions of the polyptych, it seems, in an effort to invest each panel with greater autonomy. The figure of St Sebastian, in particular, is emphasized and differentiated from the rest of the altarpiece to the extent that it challenges the main panel as the focus of the painting (fig. 57). To be sure, the figure was an integral component of a theologically complex programme; compelling spiritually oriented interpretations drawing from contemporary religious currents and careful formal analysis have been put forth in order to interpret what was by all accounts an exceptional altarpiece.[124] But the *St Sebastian* was also a monumental essay in the artfully posed male nude meant to be recognized and evaluated as such.

[124] Peter Humfrey points out that correspondence regarding the altarpiece in the early stages of its manufacture suggest that the original programme called for a polyptych with three dedicatory saints in individual panels across the lower range, and that, subsequently, Averoldi changed the plan in favour of a clear Christocentric (and hence Eucharistic) focus, a radical reorientaion from its initial hagiographical scheme; Humfrey 1996, p. 376. Alexander Nagel expands on Humfrey's reading of the altarpiece and adds that the "archaic" polyptych format may have been specifically intended to enhance these reform-minded themes; Nagel 2005, pp. 396-97.

Titian had portrayed the saint on other occasions in *sacra conversazione* altarpieces. In his earlier *St Mark* altarpiece from S. Maria della Salute in Venice of 1511-12 (fig. 58), the saint assumes the flat-footed, matter-of-fact stance characteristic of fifteenth-century images of the saint.[125] The pose is repeated in his *St Nicholas* altarpiece for the church of S. Nicolo ai Frari (begun in 1514, but revised and completed in the early 1520s; fig. 59). However, St Sebastian's body is so ill-articulated as to prompt speculation that it may have been painted by Titian's brother, Francesco;[126] Vasari even singled the figure out for one of his pithier backhanded compliments, remarking that it appeared to be "copied from life without any artifice whatsoever."[127]

By comparison, the Brescia polyptych represents an abrupt departure from Titian's other images of St Sebastian, as well as the pictorial tradition itself. The contorted body seen sideways is entirely unprecedented, as is the *virtuoso* articulation of musculature. As several scholars have pointed out, the figure of St Sebastian simultaneously recalls a profile view of the principal figure of the *Laocoön* group (fig. 60) and Michelangelo's *Rebellious Slave* (fig. 61), itself an emulation of the Hellenistic sculpture.[128] For painters and sculptors alike,

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[125] For the *St Mark* altarpiece, see Humfrey 1993a, pp. 242-46; for the S. Giobbe altarpiece, see Humfrey 1993a, pp. 203ff.

[126] For the chronology of the altarpiece, see Humfrey 1993b, pp. 226. For the possible involvement of Titian's brother, Francesco, see Hood and Hope 1977, pp. 542-43. Regardless of the matter of authorship, the figure of St Sebastian was substantially revised in a woodcut after the painting, and given a more ennobled posture in place of his relaxed stance, indicating that there was some dissatisfaction with the original composition; Rosand 1994, pp. 24-25.

[127] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 6, p. 159: "San Sebastiano ignudo, ritratto dal vivo e senza artificio." For Vasari's criticism of the figure of St Sebastian, cf. Rosand 1994, pp. 23-24.

[128] Paul Joannides further suggests that the figure of St Sebastian may have also been based on a copy after a lost design by Michelangelo for the *Young Slave*, which could have been known to Titian thrown an intermediary drawing, since lost. The raised arm and the hung head of Titian's St Sebastian do

the recently unearthed *Laocoön* quickly became an *exemplum* of the highest achievement of classical art, renowned for the harrowing visages of the doomed father and his sons and its dynamic rendering of the idealized male nude.[129] Titian's obvious interest in the *Laocoön* had already been put to use in the *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1520-1522) in the unmistakable figure of the bearded man writhing with snakes, and he would return to the model throughout his career, most pointedly in his parodic *Ape Laocoön* (c. 1566), itself a commentary on tropes of artistic imitation.[130] Certainly the *Rebellious Slave* also provided Titian with an apt model, with its twisted limbs that unmistakably conveyed corporeal suffering, and thus may have been iconographically motivated.[131] But as Leonard Barkan observes, in deploying such a conspicuous quotation, Titian purposefully and manifestly engaged in a *paragone* between himself and Michelangelo, as well as between the arts of painting and sculpture.[132] Underscoring his intent, Titian signed the painting prominently on the fragment beneath St Sebastian's foot "TITIANVS. FACIEBAT / M.D. XXII FACIEBAT," his first signed and

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correspond to a later study for the *Young Slave* (Paris, École des Beaux-Arts), although the position of the right leg and the slouched position are closer to those of the statue. It is possible that Titian used more than one source from Michelangelo; Joannides 1982, p. 3; Joannides 1990, pp. 31-32. For other examples of Titian's borrowings from Michelangelo, see Gilbert 1980b, pp. 36ff.

[129] For the impact of the Laocoön on Renaissance artists, see Barkan 1999, especially ch. 1, "Discoveries."

[130] On Titian's interest in the Laocoön, see Barkan 1999, pp. 11-17.

[131] Una Roman D'Elia characterizes Titian's heroic St Sebastian as a Christian exemplar specifically meant to act as a model of "patient suffering," and proposes that Titian deployed the Laocoön model, in order to emphasize St Sebastian's physical suffering in conscious opposition to the more elegant portrayals of the saint that were prevalent in Venetian altarpieces at the time. More tendentiously she posits that Titian's emulation of ancient pictorial models expresses the triumph of Christianity over paganism; Roman D'Elia 2005, ch. 2, "A Christian Laocoön."

[132] Barkan 1999, pp. 16-17; cf. Goffen 2002, p. 189.

dated painting and one of only four in his *oeuvre* that makes use of the term *faciebat*, a self-conscious statement of artistic creation.[133] The imperfect tense of "*faciebat*," i.e., "he was making," puts an emphasis on the process of its creation, and of the artist's own (incomplete) progress toward the mastery of painting.[134] According to Pliny, a crucial text for the formulation of Renaissance conceptions of virtuosity in the visual arts among humanists and artists alike, the great masters of antiquity had signed their works this way, and the term was revived in the Renaissance by Michelangelo himself in his Vatican *Pietà* as a self-conscious proclamation of excellence and rivalry with the ancients.[135] Thus, Titian's signature was not simply a declaration of his authorship, but announced the figure of *St Sebastian* as the embodiment of his invention and technical mastery.

By this time, Titian's fame in Venice and northern Italy was already well established, and his status as the preeminent painter in Venice was cemented with the unveiling in 1518 of his *Assumption of the Virgin* for the high altar of the Frari. Venetians were eager to see his latest offering, and the *St Sebastian* seems to have been put on display in Titian's workshop in advance of the completion of the altarpiece, much in the same way that Leonardo's *St Anne* cartoon had been exhibited at the Annunziata in Florence. The event bespeaks the importance Titian ascribed to that particular panel of the polyptych as well as the extent of his fame in Venice. Word of the painting got back to Alfonso d'Este by way of his envoy in

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[133] Cf. Goffen 2002, pp. 290-91.

[134] For the meaning and interpretation of "*faciebat*" in the Renaissance, see Juren 1974; for Titian's use of "*faciebat*," see Matthew 1998, pp. 639-40.

[135] For a survey of self-consciously learned signatures as they were deployed by artists during the Renaissance, see Goffen 2001; Goffen 2003; Rubin 2006.

Venice, Giovanni Tebaldi.[136] Tebaldi had been instructed by Alfonso to press Titian on the matter of the unfinished paintings for his *studiolo*, a situation that must have been exacerbated by the recent death of Raphael, who never returned to work on the Hunt of Meleager, even after he had been finished the commissions for the gifts to Francis I.[137] Titian, like Raphael, was quickly learning the art of juggling his illustrious clients, by assuaging the demands of lesser patrons with progress updates and reassurances while attending to more prominent and lucrative commissions. But Alfonso was an implacable patron. Enticed by Tebaldi's missives, the duke set out to acquire the *St Sebastian* – independently from the rest of the altarpiece – for his own collection.

In a letter of 25 November 1520 Tebaldi informs Alfonso of the excitement that this "most beautiful picture" had generated among Venetian viewers.[138] He adds that Titian reported to him that Averoldi "is giving him two hundred ducats for this entire panel, but that this St Sebastian is worth all of the two hundred ducats."[139] Titian's remarks echo the claims of Leonardo regarding payment for the *Virgin of the Rocks*, but here it seems that Titian's intent was almost purely rhetorical for he had deliberately conceived and executed the *St Sebastian* as an artistic *tour de force*. After finally viewing the painting, Tebaldi confirms

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[136] On the correspondence between Tebaldi and Alfonso d'Este regarding Titian's *Resurrection Altarpiece*, see Lucchesi-Ragni 1991; Goffen 2002, pp. 285-95.

[137] See especially Alfonso's letter to Tebaldi of 17th November 1520; quoted in Goffen 2002, p. 286.

[138] Giovanni Tebaldi to Alfonso d'Este, 25 November 1520: "Havendo io inteso, ch'el fa una tavola da altare al Reverendissimo [Legato] che già è come finito uno Sancto Sebastiano, del quale multo se n[e discorre in] questa terra, per essere pictura bellissima, subridendo dissi al [predetto magsitro] Titiano le formale parole;" quoted in Lucchesi Ragni 1991, p. 89.

[139] Giovanni Tebaldi to Alfonso d'Este, 25 November 1520: "Gli dona ducento ducati per tuta esta tavola, ma che questo sancto Sebastiano vale tuti epsi 200 ducati;" quoted in Lucchesi Ragni 1991, p 89; translated in Goffen 2002, p. 286.

the reports in a second letter of 1 December 1520, and writes that he "found many people from hereabouts who were viewing it with great admiration and praising it, and [Titian] said to all of us who were there that it was the best painting that he had ever done."[140] It does not seem likely that Titian meant to contest the terms of his contract with Averoldi, but his remarks must have insinuated to Tebaldi that the *St Sebastian* panel might be loosened from its contractual obligations for the right price.

No doubt the duke was emboldened in his pursuit of the *St Sebastian* by the debt owed him, but Titian was understandably reluctant. According to Tebaldi, Titian responded that "he would not know what part to play in perpetrating such a theft," to which he replied that "Your Excellency would well show the way."[141] Tebaldi's solution to the problem was to create a replacement for Averoldi, with the original panel going rather to Alfonso. In doing so, Tebaldi demonstrated a clear preference for its status as the original instantiation of Titian's invention. Tebaldi further suggested to Titian that "he could immediately begin another like it, and then eventually turn the head, a leg, an arm, etc."[142] His proposal that Titian slightly alter the replacement demonstrates his concern for maintaining the exclusivity of the original. Significantly, Tebaldi pleaded Alfonso's case on the grounds that he would

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[140] Giovanni Tebaldi to Alfonso d'Este, 1 December 1520: "Heri fui à veder la pictura de Sancto Sebastiano, che ha facto magistro Titiano, et vi trovai multi de questa terra, quali cum grande admiratione la vedevano, et laudevano et epso disse a tuti noi, ch'eramo ivi, ch'el l'era la megliore pictura, ch'el facesse mai;" quoted in Lucchesi Ragni 1991, p. 90; translated in Goffen 2002, p. 286.

[141] Giovanni Tebaldi to Alfonso d'Este, 1 December 1520: "Confortandolo a darla alla Excellentia Vostra, quando a quella gli piacesse de haverla: lui me respose, ch'el non saperia qual partito pigliare per fare questo furto;" quoted in Lucchesi Ragni 1991, p. 90; translated in Goffen 2002, p. 287.

[142] Giovanni Tebaldi to Alfonso d'Este, 1 December 1520: "Ch'el se potrìa subito dare principio ad un altra simile, et poi uno giorno voltarli il capo, una gamba, on brazo ect.;" quoted in Lucchesi Ragni 1991, p. 90; translated in Goffen 2002, pp. 287-88.

make a more deserving owner of the painting than its original patron. Tebaldi told Titian that leaving the panel in Averoldi's polyptych, would be "throwing this picture away to give it to a priest, and that he would take it to Brescia, *a place*, etc."[143] Tebaldi's message is clear: the *St Sebastian* would be wasted in a religious context, where churchmen and worshippers would fail to appreciate its true merit, that is, its artistic excellence. Worse still, compared to Venice, Brescia was positively irrelevant, when it came to matters of art, and the painting would not be available to key audiences of painters and connoisseurs. Rather, he implies, the proper venue for the *St Sebastian* was among the possessions of a cultivated viewer.

Notwithstanding Tebaldi's own allegiance to the duke's interests, such a distinction did resonate with prevailing views on painting. Indeed, in this division between sacred and secular functions of painting, Tebaldi's remarks echo those in Federico Gonzaga's near-contemporary letter to Baldassarre Castiglione of 1524, in which the Duke charges him to procure a painting from Sebastiano del Piombo of any kind "so long as it is not about saints, but rather some picture that is lovely and beautiful to look at."[144] Despite their seeming offhandedness, Gonzaga's instructions to Castiglione are suggestive of the real distinctions that were being made between the objectives of art and the purposes of religion. However, the crucial difference is that the painting that had so aroused Alfonso's interest was precisely that of a saint, one that was, in fact, lovely and beautiful to look at. Whereas Gonzaga's

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[143] Giovanni Tebaldi to Alfonso d'Este, 1 December 1520: "Partito che furono alcuni, gli disse discosto, ch'el era gettato via questa pictura, a darla a prete, et ch'el la porti a Brixia, terra etc…;" quoted in Lucchesi Ragni 1991, pp. 90; translated in Goffen 2002, p. 86.

[144] Federico Gonzaga to Baldassarre Castiglione, 3 May 1524: "Voressimo anche ne facesti fare a Sebastianello Venetiano pittore un quadro di puttra a vostro modo, non siano cose di sancti, ma qualche picture vaghe et belle de vedere;" quoted in Luzio 1974, p. 28. The implications of this passage are discussed in Nagel 2000, p. 191.

comments hint at the restrictive mandate of religious painting from the point of view of the collector, Alfonso's efforts to acquire the *St Sebastian* point instead to an alternative resolution to this perceived conflict between beauty and religion, which was not to retreat from religious subjects as Gonzaga suggests, but rather to recontextualize them within a secular context.

In the end, Alfonso backed away from his pursuit of the *St Sebastian*, thinking it prudent not to cause offence to Averoldi.[145] But he also lacked any precedent for what he had proposed to do. Whereas Francis I had been fortunate to acquire Fra Bartolommeo's *St Sebastian* when it was no longer wanted by the monks at the Annunziata, this would-be despoiler ultimately acquiesced to the sacred function of the painting. Simply put, in the sixteenth century – with genres of private art still narrowly defined and the very idea of collecting still inchoate – the only suitable place for an altarpiece was atop an altar. Altarpieces could only be removed from their sacred setting and re-purposed as collectible paintings as conventions of art permitted, regardless of how overtly they seemed to address connoisseurial viewers.

But as we have seen in this chapter, even in the first decades of the sixteenth century some altarpieces already exhibited tendencies of "dislocation," in which they were deliberately intended to perform a dual function as liturgical devices and as works of art. And, as important, there were people who wished to dislocate altarpieces. It is important to note that in most of the examples discussed in this chapter, the circumstances of the

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[145] Alfonso d'Este to Giovanni Tebaldi, 23 December 1520: "Havendo noi pensato sopra quella cosa del Sancto Sebastiano ci risolvemo di non voler far questa ingiuria a quello Reverendissimo Legato." quoted in Lucchesi Ragni 1991, pp. 92-93.

commission were exceptional, thus, loosening the usual institutional ties that bound altarpieces to their function. But at the same time their exceptionality does negate their representativeness in terms of more general shifts in the commissioning and production of altarpieces. Rather, they might be better understood as extreme examples of broader trends in altarpiece design in which intentional displays of artistic virtuosity – which often took the form of difficult poses, original compositions, or beautiful figures – appeared with increasing frequency as the sixteenth century progressed. Indeed, such was the extent of these developments that such artistically ambitious altarpieces began to attract another audience: an increasingly critical network of reform-minded ecclesiastics who believed that such aesthetic values were no longer tenable with the goals of the Church, especially in the face of the mounting pressures of the Reformation.

Chapter 4. The Rupture between Sacred and Secular

I. Tensions about Religious Art in the Years Leading to Trent

With leading artists striving to impress an audience of connoisseurs with demonstrations of inventiveness, difficulty, and complexity, it had become clear for some observers that, when it came to religious art, a disjunction had developed between the goals of artists and their patrons and the needs of the Church. Certainly many, if not most, altarpieces were stylistically conservative or conformed to traditional iconographic types, and even artistically ambitious and innovative altarpieces could strike a successful balance between virtuosity and religiosity.[1] But there could be little doubt that the pursuit of new artistic values had raised grave concerns regarding the appropriateness of images that were on view in churches. An increasing number of critics argued that the purpose of religious art had fallen subordinate to artists' self-serving efforts to advertise their talents by including conspicuous displays of skill and invention. This perceived conflict was problematic enough in itself, but for these critics, it had also led to a host of other more substantive issues: too many liberties were being taken in the illustration of scripture and hagiography; iconography had become too abstruse and convoluted for a general audience; and, worst of all, indecorous nude figures tempted viewers toward lascivious thoughts.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Savonarola had already voiced misgivings about the failings of religious art by the late fifteenth century. But by the 1520s, the Church also had to contend with the mounting threat posed by the Reformation. Protestant critics condemned the worldliness and profligacy of the pope and the curia, which had been fuelled by

[1] Cf. Weise 1970; Arasse 1987.

corruption and the impious sale of indulgences, an issue that was at the crux of the Reformist position on theological, moral, and political grounds. The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517), which had been called by Julius II in order to quell schismatic forces, marked the beginning of open dialogue on the need for renewal and reform in the Church;[2] but in practical terms, it was still business as usual in Rome. Julius's successor, Leo X (1513-1521), all but emptied the Vatican coffers with his ambitious political campaigns and extravagant patronage.[3] With the threat of the Lutheran schism looming, a Netherlandish pope, Adrian VI (1522-1523), was elected to succeed Leo in the hopes that he would be able to achieve conciliation with Protestant factions in the North.[4] Adrian's fiscal conservatism and reformist policies meant that papal patronage was vastly curtailed. Work on projects that had been begun under Leo, such as the massive fresco cycle for the Sala di Constantino in the Vatican and the Villa Madama, came to an abrupt halt during his papacy. Adrian's actions were in keeping with attitudes in the north, where Reformation critics expressed deep scepticism, if not outright hostility, toward the legitimacy of religious images and their role in devotional practices. Quickly published tracts and letters from northern reformers appeared the year of Adrian's election, which presented extensive arguments both for and against religious images, with the iconoclastic position ultimately prevailing.[5] Ultimately, however,

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[2] For the Fifth Lateran Council, see Jedin 1949, vol. 1, pp. 117-38; Minnich 1969.

[3] For a brief overview of Leo X's patronage, see Hall 1999, pp. 36-54.

[4] For Adrian's election in the context of the Reformation threat, see Pastor 1967-69, vol. 9, pp. 1-33; for his actions as a reformer, see Pastor 1967-69, vol. 9, pp. 84-126.

[5] Key texts in the debate on images in the north were Andreas Karlstadt's *Von Abtuhung der Bylder*, (Wittenberg, 1522), Hieronymus Emser's *Das Man der heyligen Bilder in der Kirchen nit abthon* (Dresden, 1522), and Johannes Eck, *De non tollendis Christi et sanctorum imaginibus* (1522).

Adrian's brief reign was ineffectual, and the election of the Medicean pope, Clement VII (1521-1534) marked a return to old ways; ambitious patronage and political aggression promptly resumed.[6] It is rather Vasari's scathing indictment of Adrian, who, he alleges, among other things, threatened to tear down Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling, that cemented his legacy as an enemy of the arts.[7]

The mounting threats faced by the Church came to a disastrous conclusion when Imperial troops descended on the Eternal City on 6 May 1527. Although the short-term consequences of the Sack of Rome for art arguably have been overstated, the catastrophic events nevertheless signalled the beginning of a shift away from the unapologetically exuberant patronage that had been underway in Rome since the papacy of Alexander VI.[8] Although the city soon began to recuperate from the immediate damage that it had sustained during the Sack, the continued Protestant threat to the Church did little to dispel the pessimistic mood that lingered in the years that followed.[9]

It was only with the election in 1534 of Clement's successor, Paul III (1534-1549)

Karlstadt published his tract against images in the midst of the iconoclastic outbreaks in Wittenberg in January 1522 in an effort to preempt any civic intervention. This immediately provoked a response from Emser who reiterated traditional defences of images. Eck's treatise, while not written specifically in support of Karlstadt, covers much of the same ground. All three treatises are translated in Mangrum and Scavizzi 1988. For the legacy of these treatises and the reformation debates in the north, see Freedberg 1986; Scavizzi 1992.

[6] For the patronage and politics of Clement VII, see Reiss 1992.

[7] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, pp. 106-07.

[8] The classic study on the Sack of Rome and its cultural impact is Chastel 1983. For a recent challenge to these views, see Hall 1999, ch. 4, "The Roman Restoration."

[9] Gleason 1978, p. 21

that the stance of the papacy shifted decisively to meet the Reformation crisis head on.[10] The gains made north of the Alps by the inexorable forces of reform needed to be taken seriously. Worse still, consensus with the Protestant position was brewing from within Italy itself: reform-minded circles, known as *spirituali*, were highly critical of the papacy's abuses of power and the undue authority it had wrongfully claimed in the spiritual lives of individuals – but crucially they sought to effect change from within the Church.[11] Expectations ran high for the new pope, and he immediately set to work on the monumental challenge of achieving reconciliation with the Protestants.[12] To this end, he appointed a number of prominent reformers, including Gasparo Contarini, Reginald Pole, and Gian Pietro da Carafa (later Paul IV) to the College of Cardinals and charged them with the task of determining a course of action to rectify the critical failings within the Church.[13] Although the resulting document, the *Consilium de emendanda ecclesia* or "Plan for Reforming the Church," produced little in the way of concrete results at the time, its unequivocal and unwavering criticisms of the papacy and the curia, particularly as they pertained to financial and administrative abuses and corruption, would become an important precursor to the Council of Trent.[14] Indeed, in the

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[10] On the high expectations for Paul III upon his election, see Pastor 1967-69, vol. 11, pp. 26-40.

[11] On the influence of the Protestant Reformation within Italy and the *spirituali* movement, see Gleason 1978; Caponetto 1999.

[12] For Paul's plan of reform in the years before Trent, see Pastor 1967-69, vol. 11, pp. 133-81; Gleason 1993, ch. 3, "Venetian Reformer at the Roman Court."

[13] The other prelates chosen for the commission were Gianmatteo Giberti, the reforming bishop of Verona; Gregorio Cortese; Contarini's confessor, Tommaso Badio; Federico Fregoso, the archbishop of Salerno and bishop of Gubbio; Jacopo Sadoleto, bishop of Carpentras; and the papal diplomat, Girolamo Aleandro.

[14] For the *Consilium de emendanda ecclesia*, see Pastor 1967-69, vol. 11, pp. 165-72; Gleason 1993, pp. 140-57. The text is translated in Gleason 1981, pp. 85-100.

fraught climate in the years leading up to Trent, few of the Church's practices were left untouched by the increasingly open and sharply critical calls for reform, and this was especially true when it came to the question of images.

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In Italy, by the end of the 1530s, the intermittent grievances against religious art that had been circulating since the time of Savonarola had cohered into a din that was increasingly difficult to ignore. Pietro Andrea Mattioli's poem about the palace of Cardinal Bernardo Cles, *Il Magno Palazzo del Cardinale di Trento* (Venice, 1539), for example, refutes what were presumably frequent criticisms of its decorations, in particular, the loggia painted by Gerolamo Romanino.[15] The loggia featured mixed scenes drawn from both ancient and biblical history with mythological themes and *ignudi*; yet even in a secular environment, the nudity was seen to be indecorous for the dignity of the cardinal's office, and this suggests something of the pervasiveness of the calls for decorum and concomitant censure of excessive nudity. These tensions came to a head with the unveiling of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in 1541 (fig. 62), which, given the grandeur and prominence of the project, became a lightning rod for attacks against religious art.[16]

The monumental work, which had been commissioned by Clement shortly before his death in 1534, became a top priority for Paul III, who perhaps believed its theme to be emblematic of the Church's mission. Michelangelo's visceral interpretation of the *Last Judgment* teems with heroic nude figures of the Elect and the Damned in varied athletic poses

[15] Frangenberg 1992, pp. 105ff.

[16] For the contemporary reception of the *Last Judgment*, see Barnes 1998; Nagel 2000, pp. 189-95; Schlitt 2005.

as they are taken to their respective fates by angels and demons, all of which is overseen by a celestial audience of saints surrounding the figure of Christ, his hand raised in a resolute gesture of admonition.[17] It was arguably the ultimate expression of Michelangelo's famed *terribilità*. Although few of Michelangelo's contemporaries would dispute the sincerity of his piety, reactions to the *Last Judgment* in the years following its unveiling were sharply divided, with the critical dialogue focusing almost exclusively on the appropriateness of its "art." What is striking about the contemporary response is that the pictorial excellence of the fresco was virtually undisputed. Rather, admirers and detractors alike recognized that this was precisely what was contentious about it. Only days after the unveiling of the *Last Judgment*, Nino Sernini, the Mantuan envoy to the papal court, wrote a letter to Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga (who sought to have a copy of the fresco made), in which he describes at some length the conflicting reactions to the *Last Judgment*. Contrasting the praise lavished on the fresco by such "worldly" figures such as Cardinal Cornaro with the derision directed against it by the ultra-conservative Theatines, Sernini neatly sums up the situation with his cutting remark that "the work is of such beauty that there is no lack of people who condemn it."[18]

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[17] The literature on the *Last Judgment* is vast; numerous readings and interpretations of the fresco have been advanced. For a useful synopsis of its iconography as well as a generally accepted interpretation of its meaning, see Partridge 1997.

[18] Nino Sernini to Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga, 19 November 1541: "Ancor che l'opera sia di quella bellezza che po' pensare V. Ill.S., non manca in ogni modo che danna; gli R.mi Chietini sono gli primi che dicono non star bene gli inudi in simil luogo, che mostrano le cose loro, benché ancora a questo ha avuto granddissima considerazione, che a pena a dieci di tanto numero si vede disonestà ... ma il R.mo Cornaro, che è stato lungamente a vederla, ha detto bene, dicendo che, se M. gli vuol dare in un quadro solamente dipinta una di quelle figure, gli la vuol pagare quello ch'esso dimanderà, et ha ragione per essere al creder mio cose che non si possono vedere altrove;" quoted in Barocchi 1962, vol. 3, p. 1260; translated in Schlitt 2005, p. 121.

Michelangelo's Tuscan compatriots staunchly defended the painting and championed the *Last Judgment* as the perfect embodiment of the Florentine artistic tradition.[19] The conspicuous artifice of the *Last Judgment*, they argued, was an appropriate means of signifying celestial, rather than earthly, beauty. Anton Francesco Doni enthuses that "on that day when Christ will come in Glory, [its beauty] will require that He command everyone to take on those poses," a joking rebuttal to criticisms of the contorted postures of the figures.[20] Other defences of the image rested on an interpretation of Michelangelo's invention as a manifestation of a divinely inspired idea. In this sense, the perceived perfection and sheer force of the *Last Judgment* – in its entirety as well as in each of its idealized and energized figures – would move the viewer to ascend to spiritual contemplation. Niccolò Martelli, for example, stresses that the divinity of the *Last Judgment* superseded its considerable artistic merits when he wrote that anyone "upon seeing it finds that its fame is great and immortal, but [that] the work itself is greater still, indeed divine."[21] Such sentiments are echoed in Vasari's claim that the figures of the *Last Judgment* "move the hearts not only of those who have knowledge [of art], but in those that have none."[22] Vasari's unapologetic discussion of the work, however, scarcely mentions its spiritual message throughout its exaltation of

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[19] For the Tuscan response to the *Last Judgment*, see Schlitt 2005, pp. 122-24, 132-33.

[20] Anton Francesco Doni to Michelangelo, 12 January 1543: "Suonami nell'orecchie la fama del Giudicio, il quale penso che, per la bellezza sua, in quel di che Christo verrà in divinità meritarà che egli imponga che tutti facciano quelle attitudini;" Barocchi/Ristori 1965-83, doc. MVI; translated in Schlitt 2005, p. 124.

[21] Niccolò Martelli to Michelangelo, 4 December 1541: "Che non l'ha veduto non cessa mai, e veggendolo, trova la fama di ciò esser grande e immortale, ma l'opera maggiore et divina?" Barocchi/Ristori 1965-83, doc. CMLXXII ; translated in Schlitt 2005, pp. 122-23.

[22] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 74: "Perché fa scuotere i cuori di tutti quegli che non son saputi, come di quegli che sanno in tal mestiero;" translated in Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, pp. 690-95.

Michelangelo's genius and his artistic legacy. Indeed, the fresco had quickly become a veritable "school" for painters who regularly convened to study Michelangelo's mastery of the human form in almost every conceivable pose and emotion.[23] Even in the second edition of the *Vite*, by which time the fresco had already been amended under pressure from the Council of Trent, Vasari fortified his defence of the *Last Judgment* with a lengthy preamble, declaring the fresco to have achieved "perfection."[24]

Yet such lofty proclamations did little to persuade its critics, who believed that Michelangelo's monumental fresco embodied all that was wrong with modern painting. While numerous iconographical details came under fire as deviations from scripture, more problematic still were its numerous nude and contorted figures, which were condemned as vain extravagances that were not only impenetrable to the uninitiated, but also stood to distract them from the spiritual message of the work. The most outspoken and severe critic of the painting, however, was the decidedly worldly Pietro Aretino. Aretino discussed the *Last Judgment* in five letters written between 1537 and 1545.[25] While initially he had been an enthusiastic supporter of the project, by the time of its unveiling, he had grown antagonistic toward Michelangelo due in large measure to his frustrated efforts to procure a drawing from the artist for his own collection. Aretino's about-face was surely calculated to

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[23] In Giovan Battista Armenini's *De' veri precetti della pittura* (Ravenna, 1587), the painter recollected studying and drawing from the frescoes among groups of other painters who would fervently discuss the work in minute detail; Armenini 1977, p. 133.

[24] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 69. For the amendments to Vasari's discussion of the *Last Judgment* between the first and second editions of the *Vite*, see, Schlitt 2005, pp. 141-42.

[25] The five letters are collected in Barocchi/Ristori 1965-83, vol. 4. On Aretino's letters regarding the *Last Judgment*, see Barnes 1998, pp. 80-84; Schlitt 2005, pp. 126-31.

appeal to a more conservative audience in order to position himself as a leading authority in the controversy swirling around religious art. But by the same token, such blatant opportunism from a figure as savvy as Aretino only confirms that critical opinion had swung decisively in favour of religion.

In his final letter (which was revised and published in 1550), he denounces the *Last Judgment* according to what had already become a familiar chorus of complaints: that it was too obscure; that it was obscene; and, that Michelangelo had neglected the sacred vocation of the image in favour of his own art. With eviscerating succinctness, Aretino condemns the *Last Judgment* as "an impiety of irreligion only equalled by the perfection of his painting."[26] For Aretino, the fresco's very magnificence only distracted viewers from more humble and, thus, more devout images of saints; he even goes so far as to invoke the actions of Gregory the Great, the seventh-century pope, who was condemned in the sixteenth century for his destruction of pagan antiquities, as a model for Paul III worthy of emulation.[27] Significantly, Aretino also alludes to the issue of nudity by declaring the image to be more suited to a "voluptuous bathhouse" than the "highest chapel in the world."[28] It is a biting insult, for bathhouses were synonymous with brothels. But taken another way, by problematizing Michelangelo's errors as a function of place, he implies that the problem with the *Last*

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[26] Pietro Aretino to Michelangelo, November 1545: "Adunque quel Michelagnolo stupendo in la fama, quel Michelagnolo notabile in la prudentia, quel Michelagnolo ammiranno nei costum ha voluto mostrare a le genti non meno impietà di irreligione che perfettion di pittura?"; Barocchi/Ristori 1965-83, doc. MXLV; translated in Klein and Zerner 1966, p. 122.

[27] Barocchi/Ristori 1965-83, doc. MXLV. For the legacy of Gregory the Great during the Renaissance, see Buddensieg 1965.

[28] Pietro Aretino to Michelangelo, November 1545: "In un bagno delitioso, non in un choro supreme si conveniva il far vostro!"; Barocchi/Ristori 1965-83, doc. MXLV; translated in Klein and Zerner 1966, p. 123.

Judgment was not simply due to its alleged impiety, but that Michelangelo's artistic ambitions would be better suited to a secular venue.

Vasari studiously avoided comment on the mounting controversy regarding the *Last Judgment*, even though he would have been in the midst of compiling the *Vite* during the same period that Aretino and others were denouncing Michelangelo's masterpiece. However, in a conspicuous passage in the 1550 edition introducing the Life of Fra Angelico, Vasari levels an indirect, but nevertheless pointed rebuttal to the criticisms against nude figures that had plagued the *Last Judgment*, and other paintings. He writes:

> I would not have any man deceive himself by considering the awkward and clumsy devout, as some do, who, seeing figures of women or youths adorned with loveliness and beauty beyond the ordinary, censure them immediately and judge them lascivious, without perceiving that they are very wrong to condemn the good judgment of the painter, who considers that the male and female saints, who are celestial, are much more beautiful than mortal nature as Heaven is superior to earthly beauty and to our works. What is more, they display the foulness and corruption of their own minds in drawing evil and impure desires out of works from which, if they were lovers of purity, as they seek by their misguided zeal to prove themselves to be, they would have the longing for Heaven.[29]

It is a curiously placed remark. Although Vasari holds Fra Angelico as the exemplum of the spiritually inspired artist, the Frate was not known for painting nude, or even sensual figures (with the notable exception of the failed *St Sebastian* at the Annunziata). Instead Vasari takes to task reform-minded critics who praised "awkward and clumsy" paintings on the

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[29] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 3, pp. 274: "Ma io non vo' già che alcuni s'ingannino interpretando il devoto per goffo et inetto, come fanno certi che, veggendo pitture dove sia una figura o di femmina o di giovane un poco più vaga e più bella e più adorna d'ordinario, le pigliano e giudicano sùbito per lascive, né si avveggano che non solo dannano il buon giudizio del pittore, il quale tiene de' Santi e Sante che son celesti e tanto più belle della natura mortale quanto avanza il cielo la terrena bellezza dell'opere nostre, ma ancora scuoprono l'animo loro essere infetto e corrotto, cavando male e voglie non oneste di quello che, se é fussino amatori della onestà come in quel loro zelo sciocco voglion mostrare, eglino ne caverebbono desiderio del cielo; " translation adapted from Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 409.

grounds that their very lack of beauty endowed them with piety. He insists instead that idealized figures and elaborate compositions were not simply compatible with religion, but best gave expression to the innate perfection of the sacred.[30]

One suspects the task of defending the art from criticisms of licentiousness – which implicates works that are unequivocally praised elsewhere in the *Vite* for their beauty – was an unwelcome subject for Vasari. But by the time of the second edition even Vasari was forced to capitulate to the restrictive climate of post-Tridentine Italy. Although Vasari had otherwise staunchly held out against the criticisms against artistic virtuosity (and continued to defend the *Last Judgment* on precisely those grounds), he qualified his remarks on Fra Angelico, adding that he did not "approve of those nude figures which are painted in churches in a state of almost complete nudity, because they prove that the artist has not shown the consideration that was due to the *place*" and that "whenever an artist wishes to display his skill he ought to do so with a full regard for the circumstances, the persons, the time and the *place*."[31] Vasari's amendments to his text hinge – as did Aretino's criticisms of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* almost a quarter of a century earlier – on the issue of the decorum of place. But much had changed in the intervening years: the distinction between sacred and secular contexts, which had formed the basis for an off-handed insult by Aretino,

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[30] As Nagel points out awkward (*goffo*) and clumsy (*inetto)*)are terms Vasari uses repeatedly in reference to medieval art; Nagel 2000, p. 191

[31] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 3, p. 274 (emphasis mine): "Ma non perciò vorrei che alcuni credessero che da me fussero approvate quelle figure che nelle chiese sono dipinte poco meno che nude del tutto, perché in cotali si vede che il pittore non ha avuto quella considerazione che doveva al luogo: per ché, quando pure si ha da mostrare quanto altri sappia, si deve fare con le debite circostanze, et aver rispetto alle persone, a' tempi et ai luoghi;" translated adapted from Vasari DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 408-09.

had since been officially promulgated with the Council of Trent's decrees on religious images.

II. The Bifurcation of Art and Image: Gilio's *Dialogo contro gli errori de' pittori* and Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle imagine sacre e profane*

Following aborted attempts to call an ecumenical council at Mantua and Vicenza, the Colloquy at Regensburg in 1541, which had been summoned by Charles V in an effort to achieve political unity in the face of the looming Turkish threat, irrevocably ended any hopes for reconciliation between the Protestants and the Church.[32] The long-awaited Council of Trent finally got underway – without the participation of the Protestants – in 1545, but the question of images was not finally addressed until the final session on 3 and 4 December 1563, prompted by the recent iconoclastic outbreaks in France.[33] Given the time constraints, the matter was treated hastily and summarily: the conclusions about religious art amounted to little more than a rehearsal of prevailing defences of images rather than any sort of genuine inquiry into the criticisms voiced repeatedly by the Reformers. The decrees both reaffirmed the traditional distinction between image and prototype that dated back to the iconoclastic outbreaks of the eighth and ninth centuries and reiterated longstanding justifications of images, synthesizing key strands of thought drawn from the long history of debate on the nature of religious images, from Gregory the Great's crucial definition of the *biblia*

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[32] For the failed councils at Mantua and Vicenza, see Jedin 1949, vol. 1, pp. 288-354; Gleason 1993, ch. 4, "Illusion and Reality: Regensburg 1541." For the aftermath of the Colloquy at Regensburg, see Caponetto 1999, ch. 7, "The End of an Illusion."

[33] *On the vocation, veneration and relics of saints, and on sacred images*, 3 and 4 December 1563, translated in Klein and Zerner 1966, pp. 119-22. The related body of literature is vast; however, Anthony Blunt's classic essay, "The Council of Trent and Religious Art," remains a useful introduction to the salient points of the Tridentine decrees on images; Blunt 1962, pp. 103-36.

pauperum to the medieval notion that images served to instruct, to affirm articles of faith, and to stimulate devotion. This is not to say the participants of Trent were not well-versed in the arguments brought against images. Rather, their mandate was to present a unified and decisive stance on the question of images, and there may have been some concern that to engage questions regarding the validity of images that dominated debates in the north would have been to tacitly validate them.[34] But the Church's position also stemmed from a fundamentally different orientation, in which the practice of official religion without images was virtually unthinkable. In Catholic Italy, images were not only entrenched in liturgical rituals and devotional habits far more pervasively than elsewhere in Europe, but, more importantly, they had become the economic lifeblood of many, if not most, parish and conventual churches. It is important to remember that the decrees on images begin first with the justification of the veneration of saints, a point of faith that was crucial to the whole system of *ius patronatus* in Italy. Thus, the question at hand was not whether there should be images, as it had been in the north, but rather what kinds of images there should be.

But on this matter the Council of Trent did little more than state the obvious, tersely advising that "nothing may appear that is disorderly or unbecoming and confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing disrespectful, since holiness becometh the house of God."[35] To this end, the Council of Trent also served notice that bishops would be responsible for ensuring these directives were followed within their respective dioceses on a case-by-case basis, seeing to it that existing images were appropriate and in good repair, and, approving all

[34] Cf. Freedberg 1986, p. 72.

[35] Klein and Zerner 1966, p. 121.

altarpieces and other images in the future. And, lastly, before the Council concluded, a decree was issued on 21 January 1564 to cover the "obscene" parts of Michelangelo's now-infamous *Last Judgment*.[36] In the twenty years since its unveiling, criticisms continued to be levelled against the *Last Judgment*; Paul IV (1559-1564) allegedly had even threatened to have it demolished under the pretence of enlarging the chapel after Michelangelo rebuked his request to "mend" the painting.[37] Despite the myriad complaints about its iconography, the revisions, which were expeditiously carried out by Daniele da Volterra, were limited to covering the nudes with draperies and repainting of the grouping of Sts Blaise and Catherine whose sexually suggestive juxtaposition had caused some scandal through the circulation of prints.[38] Even if the alterations to the *Last Judgment* still left most of the scriptural "errors" intact, they nevertheless sent a clear message that no work of art would be exempt from the enforcement of the Tridentine decrees. Although the *Last Judgment* was ultimately spared, according to the decree, any other images in churches found to be "obscene" or "fallacious" would be destroyed.[39]

After decades of open debate on religious images on both sides of the Alps, the salient

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[36] Barocchi 1962, vol. 3, pp. 1377-78.

[37] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, p. 715.

[38] For Volterra's interventions, see Mancinelli 1997, pp. 172ff. Even before the Council of Trent similar interventions had been carried out on Giambattista Ponchini's altarpiece of the *Christ in Limbo* for S. Liberale in Castelfranco in 1554 under threat of excommunication by Bishop Franciscus Verdura, who ordered that the nude figures be repainted and the panel covered in the meantime; Anderson 1974.

[39] Barocchi 1962, vol. 3, p. 1377: "Picturae in Capella Apostolica copriantur, in allis autem ecclesiis deleantur si aliquid obscaenum aut evidenter falsum ostendant" ("The paintings in the Apostolic chapel are to be covered; however, in other churches, such paintings are to be destroyed if anything obscene or evidently false is shown"); translated in Schlitt 2005, p. 145, note 10.

points regarding the problems with religious art were surely understood among high-ranking church officials. However, with the accumulation of centuries of frescos, altarpieces, and *ex votos* on view in churches throughout the Italian peninsula, it was a difficult task to definitively prescribe what exactly religious art should or should not look like. To help fill in the blanks left by the Council of Trent, an entirely new kind of art discourse emerged, in which ecclesiastical writers sought to formulate clear rules regarding the form and content of religious art.

The first of these treatises, Giovanni Andrea Gilio's *Dialogo degli errori de' pittori* (Camerino, 1564), appeared soon after the conclusion of Trent and would influence almost all subsequent discourse on religious art.[40] The work was in preparation already in 1562 and makes no specific reference to the Tridentine decrees in the *Dialogo*; however, the title states Gilio's purpose clearly and unequivocally: to explain how painters had erred when it came to religious art (a second, and much less well known dialogue addressed the errors of patrons and their advisors), with a stated focus on the transgressions of that *ne plus ultra* of indecorous art, Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*. In brief, the treatise presents a thoroughgoing denunciation of the vanity of those artists – as well as the patrons who supported them – who flaunted conspicuous displays of invention and skill at the expense of the religious purpose of their works. Gilio condemns those images that were needlessly complex and contained obscure and hermetic iconography, which was not only impenetrable to the uneducated but was also replete with scriptural and hagiographical errors. With regard to execution, he

[40] Giovanni Andrea Gilio, *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'istorie. Con molte annotatione fatte sopra il Giudizio di Michelangelo et altre figure, tanto de la nova, quanto de la vecchia capella del Capella del Papa. Con la dechiarzione come vogliono essere dipinte le sacre imagini* (Camerino 1564). For the text and annotations, see Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62.

singles out for special censure those hallmarks of contemporary painting, the *figura serpentinata* and foreshortening, which he argues were more likely to draw laughter on account of their peculiar contortions. Worse even still was the preponderance of idealized nudes, which, he contends, were almost always extraneous to the subject and only served to entice the viewer toward lascivious thoughts.[41]

Gilio, like other commentators before him, believed that the goals of art were in open conflict with the needs of religion. Accordingly, he reiterates throughout the *Dialogo* a neat binary in which artistic values and religious content are held to be mutually exclusive, with the former almost always coming at the expense of the latter. Gilio's recommendations for the reform of religious art sought to resolve what he perceived to be the root problem of this conflict: license. *Licenza*, that is, the artist's prerogative to depart from rules as guided by their own judgment was the lynchpin of sixteenth-century art theory as codified in Vasari's *Vite*, and it was precisely the thing that Gilio wanted to expunge from religious art. What painting needed instead, he argues in the *Dialogo*, were rules and order.[42] Gilio shrewdly aims his guns at artists' traditional recourse to Horace's well-worn simile "*ut pictura poesis*," which had been marshalled as a justification to claim the same creative autonomy as enjoyed by poets; he (correctly) argues that painters had misunderstood Horace, and that the ancients had always been careful to stay within the bounds of decorum, which, he stresses, was

[41] Gilio is almost invariably mentioned in any scholarship on late-sixteenth-century art, although there are no extensive studies, to my knowledge, devoted specifically to him. Several helpful discussions of Gilio's criticisms of religious art can be found in the following: Blunt 1962, pp. 111ff.; Dempsey 1982, pp. 64ff.; Scavizzi 1992, 93-99; Williams 1997, pp. 91-94; Lingo 2008, pp. 77ff.

[42] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, see esp. pp. 16-25.

governed by conventions of genre.[43] Gilio proceeds to demarcate three principal types of painting: historical, which adheres to the truth; poetic, which allows for free invention; and mixed, which combines the two, usually in the form of allegory.[44] Although he takes pains to explain the essential characteristics of all three genres, it is the historical genre, which incorporates all religious images, that concerns him most.

Instrumental to Gilio's conception of religious art is his insistence on absolute fidelity to scriptural and hagiographical sources. His scope, however, extends beyond the sort of obvious excesses and transgressions that had been so problematic for the *Last Judgment*, for he was even willing to overturn even longstanding pictorial traditions that had proven relatively unproblematic if he found them wanting in faithfulness to their respective sources. For example, he iss critical of the common practice of portraying Christ in an idealized form in respresentations of the Passion (specifically the Flagellation, the Ecce Homo, the Crucifixion, the Deposition, and the Entombment) rather than showing His physical suffering, and Gilio similarly frowned upon sanitized depictions of saints such as St Sebastian without enough arrows, St Lawrence without burns, or St Blaise with his head intact.[45] His most exacting and thoroughgoing scrutiny, however, is reserved for the *Last Judgment*. Gilio finds fault with any number of details, ranging from the inappropriate inclusion of Charon and Minos from Dante's *Inferno* to the depiction of fluttering draperies, which contradicted the fact that winds (and time itself) would have ceased during the

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[43] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, pp. 18-19.

[44] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, pp. 15.

[45] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, pp. 40-43.

Apocalypse.[46] Gilio's exacting criticisms of seemingly inconsequential details may strike modern readers as excessive, as they surely did many of his contemporaries, but this stringency was also consonant with his aims.[47] He wanted religious art to function as a straightforward presentation of spiritual truths, in which the artist's sole aim would be to render the source material as faithfully as possible. The role of the painter was relegated to that of "translator," interpreting words into images in the most direct and lucid manner possible, ensuring the veracity of the content down to the smallest detail.[48] Gilio was certainly familiar with the oft-heard defence that in taking liberties with subject matter, painters were only seeking to convey meaning through more expressive means, an explanation he finds untenable. In the discussion of the *Last Judgment*, the principal interlocutor and mouthpiece for Gilio's views, Canon Ruggiero Corradini, specifically dispels this counter-argument. In response to the protestations that in depicting Christ standing rather than seated Michelangelo was able to better convey the "*terribilità*" of Christ's judgment, he responds that it "may be right that [Michelangelo] intended to interpret the words of the Gospel mystically and allegorically, but first of all literal meaning should be taken, whenever this can be properly done … keeping to the letter as often as possible."[49]

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[46] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, pp. 56ff.

[47] Charles Dempsey's important article on Counter-Reformation painting argues that Gilio has often been treated too harshly and dismissively in art historical scholarship, and that his criticisms against Michelangelo were not only internally consistent, but also profoundly incisive; Dempsey 1982, pp. 64-70. More recently, Alexander Nagel has put forward a similarly sympathetic reading of Gilio's *Dialogo* as being consistent with attitudes toward religious art held by intellectual elites; Nagel 2000, pp. 14-15, 50-51.

[48] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, p. 39: "Il pittore istorico altro non è che un traslatore, che porti l'istoria da una lingua in un'altra, e questi da la penna al pennello, da la scrittura a la pittura."

[49] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, p. 74: "Che misticamente et allegoricamente interpretar volesse le parole

This insistence on fidelity and literalness helps to explain Gilio's unusual praise for medieval art, which he admired for its "truth" and "devotion"[50] even when he does concede that these paintings deserved "to be laughed at rather than marvelled art" on account of their artistic shortcomings.[51] He thus proposes a new style termed the "*regolata mescolanza*," which would combine the humility and clarity of medieval painting with the superior techniques of modern painting.[52] With Gilio's disingenuous conclusion that the painter who adhered to these rules would demonstrate greater ingenuity than those beholden to showy demonstrations of conspicuous artifice, we are a far cry from the connoisseurial reception of artistically ambitious altarpieces of the early sixteenth century as discussed above.

Gilio's *Dialogo* gave voice to the recurring criticisms of religious art in the proscriptive climate of post-Tridentine Italy. It is less often emphasized, however, that he was tolerant when it came to other genres of art, a quality that was not shared by later ecclesiastical writers, such as Johannes Molanus or Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, who explicitly opposed any subject that was indecent or even merely entertaining, regardless of context,

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del testo evangelico, potrebbe questa vostra opinion passare; ma prima si deve prendere il sentimento letterale, quando propriamente dar si possa, e poi gli altri, e salvare la lettera quanto più possibile sia."

[50] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, p. 111: "Il dipingere le sacre imagini oneste e devote, con que' segni che gli sono stati dati dagli antichi per privileggio de la santità;" On Gilio's appreciation of medieval art, see Previtale 1989, pp. 20-27.

[51] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, p. 55: "Fingere cose più tosto degne di riso che di maraviglia."

[52] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62; 56: "Se quelli [the medieval artists] erravano nel poco, e questi [the modern artists] errano nel molto; però sarebbe bene di quel poco e di questo molto fare regolata mescolanza e cavare un mezzo che suplisse al difetto degli uni e degli altri, acciò l'opere abbino le debite proporzioni." On the *regolata mescolanza* see Batllori et al. 1978, pp. 33-37. For artistic strategies of implementing the *regolata mescolanza*, see Lingo 2008, ch. 1, "Orders of Reform."

allowing only profane subjects that were morally or spiritually edifying.[53] As we have seen, in the years around Trent, decorum had become the critical locus for the debates swirling around religious art; but unlike other contemporary commentators, Gilio recognized that to criticize religious art on the grounds of decorum, by extension, implied that art made for secular contexts should not be subject to the same standards. Indeed, he briefly pauses from his evisceration of the *Last Judgment* to refer to the Horatian dictum: "It was wisdom in antiquity to separate the private from the public and the profane from the sacred."[54] Accordingly, he allows that poetic and mixed genres, which were associated with the private sphere, were not bound to the same imperatives as historical (i.e., religious) painting, save for some measure of reason.[55] In acknowledging that different aesthetic "rules" should be applied to sacred and profane art as well as to public venues and private collections, Gilio delineated a similar distinction to that made four decades prior by Federico Gonzaga between pictures of saints and pictures that were beautiful.[56] In other words, Gilio and Gonzaga had arrived at the same conclusion, albeit from opposing points of view. It would be a stretch to say that Gilio would have approved of the type of licentious images that collectors like Gonzaga hung in their private chambers, but significantly, he does not speak out against them. In this respect, the *Dialogo* was arguably the first clear meditation on the dual roles of

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[53] For Gilio and Molanus, see Freedberg 1971, p. 229; for Gilio and Paleotti, see Scavizzi 1992, pp. 135-36.

[54] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, p. 71: "Fu sapienza ne l'antica etade / Di seperar dal publico il privato / E de la sacre le profane cose."

[55] Gilio/Barocchi 1960-62, pp. 89-92.

[56] See p. 165 above.

religious paintings, in which the roles of the devotional image and art are identified as entirely separate concerns – not loosely intermingled as they had been in writings on art from Alberti to Vasari. What was needed was separate pictorial languages for sacred and secular paintings, and separate venues in which to view them.

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Gilio's *Dialogo* was the first of a succession of treatises in the remaining decades of the sixteenth century to propose programmes of artistic reform. Ecclesiastics and theologians including Molanus, Paleotti, and Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, among others, promulgated the Tridentine decrees on images with justifications for the legitimacy of holy images and proscriptions against abuses and errors in the depiction of the sacred. Gilio's successors argued in some form or another that the aesthetic values of artistic achievement were at odds with religious images; but they did not share his tolerance of profane images.[57] Although Molanus and Borromeo concerned themselves strictly with religious images, it was Paleotti who advocated the most radical measures toward the reform of all types of painting because he recognized that the problem with religious images implicated their viewers as well.

Upon his 1566 appointment as Bishop of Bologna, Paleotti, who had been a participant in the final session of the Council of Trent, immediately set about enacting Tridentine reforms in the city's religious institutions as well as its famed university. Paolo Prodi's authoritative biography of the cardinal has amply documented Paleotti's efforts to promulgate a pastoral approach to reform, in which he led by personal example and sought to

[57] For the influence of Gilio on subsequent writers on art, see Scavizzi 1992, pp. 115-48. For Molanus in particular, see Freedberg 1971; for Ligorio, see Coffin 1964; for Paleotti, see Jones 1995; for Borromeo, see Voelker 1988. For an overview of these and other ecclesiastical writers on art, including Giovanni Battista Armenini, Gregorio Comanini, and Antonio Possevino, see Marcora 1985.

inspire rather than impose pious behaviour upon the faithful.[58] Following the example of his frequent correspondent, Borromeo, whose treatise on church architecture was published in 1577, in the late 1570s Paleotti also turned his efforts to the reform of images.[59] The *Discorso intorno alle imagine sacre e profane* (Rome, 1582) appeared five years later, with the express purpose of instructing ecclesiastics and nobles on the proper embellishment of churches and residences according to the decrees of Trent.[60]

Paleotti was clearly well versed in the recent writings of Gilio and Molanus, whose *De picturis et imaginibus sacris* (Louvain, 1570) was the first comprehensive application of the Tridentine decrees on images to be published north of the Alps (Paleotti would later lend his copy to Carlo Borromeo) as well as the long history of Christian image theory.[61] Like Gilio and Molanus, Paleotti devotes much of the *Discorso* to cataloguing the myriad abuses of religious images, but unlike his predecessors he is also especially attentive to the process of viewing pictures, perhaps as an outcome of his extensive consultations with ecclesiastics as well as scholars from the University of Bologna (including the renowned naturalist, Ulisse Aldrovandi).[62] In Book I, in which he discusses the origins and uses of religious images,

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[58] Prodi 1959/67, vol. 2, pp. 323-88.

[59] For the correspondence between Paleotti and Borromeo, see Prodi 1964.

[60] Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane diviso in cinque libri, dove si scuoprono varii abusi loro e si dichiara il vero modo che cristianamente si doverìa osservare nel porle nelle chiese, nelle case et in ogni altro luogo* (Rome, 1582). For the text and annotations, see Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, as well as the recent English translation, Paleotti/McCuaig 2012.

[61] Paleotti's sources are amply documented in the annotations to Barocchi's authoritative edition of the *Discorso*, Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62.

[62] For Paleotti's collaborators, see Prodi 1959-67, vol. 2, pp. 533ff.; Bianchi 2008, ch. 2, "A dialogo con artisti, letterati ed ecclesiastici;" and, most recently, Prodi 2012, pp. 15-19.

Paleotti insists that all art – both sacred and profane – serves a spiritual, educational, and moral purpose.[63] Paleotti thus implores artists to create unambiguous and decorous works to inspire devotion and provide instruction, regardless of genre or venue. In doing so, Paleotti effectively bypasses the whole problem of decorum by rendering all types of images and, by extension, all places, including secular and/or private settings, subject to the same restrictions.

Paleotti's concern for clarity in painting also arises from his beliefs about viewership, and the needs of "*idioti*," that is, illiterate viewers, in particular.[64] Uneducated viewers not only comprised the majority of viewers, their reliance on and susceptibilities to images were far more critical in the context of Church reform. And unlike educated Christian viewers, who have the intellectual ability to decipher complex subjects and themes and to appreciate their beauty, the uneducated, he argues, are not only dependent on easily comprehensible images for their understanding of the bible and moral instruction but are also more predisposed to respond inappropriately to sensual beauty. Accordingly, in Book II, Paleotti presents a sprawling litany of the most common errors found in both sacred and profane images. As indicated in the preface to the *Discorso*, Paleotti planned three further books; the entire third book would deal exclusively with to false and lascivious images, which he believed to be the most pervasive and dangerous of the abuses against Christian images. It is

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[63] For Paleotti's comments on the utility of secular genres of paintings, see in particular, Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, Book I, ch. XII, "Delle cause perché s'introducessero le imagini profane;" and Book II, ch. XXIV, "Delle pitture profane che rappresentano varie cose, come guerre, paesi, edificii, animali, arbori, piante e simili."

[64] Cf. Boschloo 1974, vol. 1, ch. 7 "Paleotti's 'Discorso intorno alle iamgini sacre e profane';" and Jones 1995.

only in the fourth book that he was to provide practical guidelines on the depiction of sacred personages, with the fifth book dealing more generally with recommendations for suitable subjects according to venue.[65]

In the concluding chapters of Book II, Paleotti abruptly returns to the subject of viewership and asserts that religious images that conformed to his precepts would satisfy the spiritual and devotional needs of a "universal" and "undifferentiated" Christian audience.[66] Lest there be any confusion on the matter, Paleotti classifies his audience into four groups: *pittori* (painters and sculptors), *letterati* (nobles, professionals, and intellectuals), *idioti* (the illiterate), and *spirituali* (the clergy).[67] Each group of viewers, in turn, judges a painting according to different criteria: good (i.e., imitative) design for the painters; factual accuracy for the intellectuals; liveliness and clarity for the illiterate; and, subject matter for the spirituals, whose faith leads to pleasure in viewing all "signs of religion and sanctity." This is a calculated and effective manoeuvre. Paleotti reiterates the preceding argument that art must serve uneducated viewers foremost, thereby overturning the prevailing assumption among art writers that the artist should address himself to the cultivated tastes of connoisseurs. Moreover, by placing artists alongside other categories of viewers, Paleotti, undermines their status as creators, and with it the prerogatives of artist knowledge and

[65] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, pp. 124-25.

[66] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, Book II, ch. LI, "Di alcuni avertimenti generali posti dagli autori, da osservarsi in ciascuna pittura perché sodisfaccia universalmente."

[67] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, Book II, ch. LII, "Conclusione di quello che principalmente si giudica necessario, affine che le cose che si dipingono sieno da tutti commendate."

judgment.[68]

Paleotti does not dwell on matters of style, but instead tersely declares that painting must be imitative. "Everyone may find the qualities of this or that visually rendered thing particularly to his taste," he writes, "but there is one quality that is a universal standard applying to everything design may represent, and that is imitation."[69] To be clear, by imitation, Paleotti meant pure mimesis, citing the illusionism achieved by Zeuxis and Parrhasius (as recounted by Pliny) as an ideal example. Paleotti argues that art that closely imitates nature will delight viewers in the recognition of the resemblance achieved by the painter, thereby leading to rational contemplation of God's works, and even spiritual enlightenment for the most learned and devout.[70] Accordingly, throughout the *Discorso*, he condemns not just artistic virtuosity and invention – qualities he criticizes as self-serving and inhibiting the conveyance of spiritual or moral lessons – but aesthetic delectation itself. Likewise, he censures any sort of reference to antiquity, not simply because it is pagan, but because antique subjects and models were imitated by artists precisely for their aesthetic value, which is entirely dispensable according to Paleotti's project of reform. (He does concede that collectors would be disinclined to part with valuable holdings, so he advises

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[68] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, pp. 497-501.

[69] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, p. 218: "Del diletto razionale dicemo che, oltre il particolare gusto che puo ciascuno pigliare dalla qualità delle cose figurate, una ve ne è, che universalmente serve a tutte quelle che col disegno si rappresentano, che e l'imitazione."

[70] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, Book I, ch. XXII, "Della dilettazione che apportano le imagini cristiane."

them instead to transfer offending images to sequestered areas of their residences, where they would not be viewed by unwilling Christians).[71]

But if the problem of licentious and indecorous art results from the transgressions of their viewers, as Paleotti argues it does, then more far-reaching conclusions could be drawn. In Book I, Paleotti devotes a chapter to the question of genre, so to speak, stating that all images can be classified as either sacred or profane.[72] But as he further explains, the differences between these categories were far from rigid. He elaborates:

> The differences between the two kinds of images lie on the one had in the works themselves, and on the other in the beholder. It is possible that an image, according to its nature and form, is rightly included in the sacred kind, but actually is placed by the beholder into a different category … An image may be regarded by some as religious and sacred, by others both impious and perverse as an idol, and yet by other fools as profane painting, which serves only as entertainment.[73]

Paleotti concludes with the dictum: "*Quod omne receptum habet se per modum recipientis et non recepti*" (Because the reception of everything exists through the condition of the perceiver, not that of the perceived thing).[74] More than simply denouncing the aesthetic engagement with sacred images, Paleotti theorizes its implications for religion as well as

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[71] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, Book II, ch. X, "Delle pitture di Giove, di Apolline, Mercurio, Giunone, Cerere et altri falsi dei."

[72] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, Book I, ch. X, "Che tutte le imagini si riducono a due capi principali: che sono o sacre o profane."

[73] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, pp.171-72: "Queste differenze dette, delle imagini sacre e profane, si possono considerare in due modi: l'uno quanto alla figura per sé stessa, l'altro quanto alla persona che le riguarda; perché potrà essere che una imagine di sua natura e secondo la sua forma debba giustamente essere riposte tra le sacre, e nientedimeno che la mira la collocherà in altro ordine … Così, in queste imagini … essere tenuta da qualcuno per religiosa e sacra, la quale da altri perversi et empii si terra per idolo, e da altri sciochi come pittura profana, che serva solo per passatempo;" translation adapted from Belting 1994, doc. 44.

[74] Paleotti/Barocchi 1960-62, p. 172.

picture making *tout court*. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, artists and connoisseurs did frequent churches in order to view the paintings and sculptures within them and reprovals against this practice had been voiced repeatedly before and after Trent. But Paleotti's predecessors had not gone so far as to claim that the viewer himself had the power to secularize religious images simply through their attitude toward them, even when the images themselves were not necessarily licentious or indecorous. Even if we allow for a degree of oversimplification in Paleotti's reconfiguration of the problem of decorum solely in terms of viewer reception, the radicality of the conceit itself remains: religious pictures could be – and were – profaned by their audience who viewed them as works of art. When considered in the context of Paleotti's recommendations for purely mimetic painting, it becomes clear that he meant to deny viewers the opportunity to appreciate a painting according to its artistic merit (other than according to its fidelity to God's creation) because to do so would endow the viewer with the ability to render a sacred image profane even when it was not intended as such. But if Paleotti's precepts for a purely functional type of religious image were directed toward works yet to be created, what did this mean for those works already installed in Italy's churches?

III. The Bifurcation of Art and Image: Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo*

Although art writing in the decades immediately following Trent was dominated by ecclesiastics, Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo* addresses some of the same issues discussed by Gilio and Paleotti from the point of view of the connoisseur. The *Riposo*, which was published in Florence in 1584, follows in the vein of mid-century dialogues on painting that

were oriented toward the lay reader, but is adapted to the post-Tridentine artistic landscape.[75] The dialogue consists of four parts: the first deals with aspects of art theory and decorum; the second concerns technique and practice; the third discusses the history of art from antiquity to the first generation of sixteenth-century artists and is derived in large part from Vasari; while the fourth covers painters active from 1520 to his own time. The title takes its name from a villa outside of Florence (which still exists today) belonging to the art collector and Medici advisor, Bernardo Vecchietti. As host of the villa where most of the dialogue take place, Vecchietti usually leads the discussion and is joined by Borghini's actual peers, who represent a cross-section of knowledgeable Florentine viewers as is typical of the dialogic genre: the sculptor and collector, Ridolfo Sirigatti; the renowned patron and scholar, Baccio Valori; and the dilettante, Girolamo Michelozzi.[76] Whereas previous dialogues had been heavily one-sided, often featuring a naïve or misguided interlocutor posing leading questions or voicing loaded opinions that would provoke lengthy, didactic responses from an author-proxy, the *Riposo* takes on the flavour of the cultivated conversations that might have actually taken place among collectors and connoisseurs, in which all parties expressed their opinions with no one viewpoint clearly prevailing.[77]

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[75] Raffaello Borghini, *Il riposo di Raffaele Borghini in cui della pittura e della scultura si favella, de' più famose opere loro si fa menzione, e le cose principali appartenenti a dette arti s' insegnano* (Florence, 1584). For an analysis of the treatise and full English translation, see Ellis 2002.

[76] For the identification of these figures, see Ellis 2007, pp. 24-25, 41-42.

[77] Further still, Charles Hope argues that the diverging opinions of the four interlocutors were more likely to be representative of the different viewpoints of the real, historical personages, rather than simply constructed by Borghini himself; Hope 1982.

It is a leisurely visit on a hot spring day to see the collections at the villas of Vecchietti and Sirigatti that sets the stage for the ensuing discussion of art. The dialogue takes place over several days during which the group undertakes two tours of local churches in order to discuss the works within them. In the first (Book I), which follows an overview of contemporary art theory, religious paintings are evaluated in terms of their decorum and fidelity to scripture; while in the second (Book II), which comes after the discussion of practice and technique, they are appraised in terms of their artistic merits. Borghini's cumbersome organization of the dialogue, which means that many works are discussed twice, nevertheless represents an earnest and diligent effort to apply the lessons of the *Dialogo*: Gilio's distinction between the historic and poetic and between the sacred and the profane defines the very structure of the book. Indeed, the inelegance of Borghini's solution seems indicative of the real ways artists, ecclesiastics, and tastemakers struggled to come to terms with what had become a problematic dichotomy between art and image.[78] Dealing with subject and execution as separate concerns was the only way Borghini could accommodate otherwise indecorous altarpieces that he clearly admired. It comes as little surprise that it was an amateur that seized upon this aspect of Gilio's proposed reform of painting. Borghini, after all, was still very much in favour of art.

During the group's imaginary tours of major Florentine churches, the works discussed date almost exclusively from the 1540s onward, a calculated selection comprising many examples drawn from the most recent generation of painters trained in the Florentine

[78] Cf. Barocchi 1979, p. 32; Hall 1979, pp. 55ff.

tradition as codified in the recently founded Accademia del Disegno.[79] Accordingly, the city's two major mendicant churches, S. Maria Novella and S. Croce, both of which had undergone sweeping renovations undertaken under the aegis of Cosimo I, figure prominently in the dialogue.[80] The renovations at each church entailed the removal of the choir screen in order to make Mass more visible to the laity in accordance with the renewed emphasis on the Eucharist entailed in post-Tridentine reforms as well as a massive overhaul of the interior space in order to clear away the chaotic accretion of devotional images and ex-votos.[81] In the process, most of the private chapels were repossessed from their original owners and divested of their furnishings in order to make way for new altarpieces that would be both uniform in their appearance and unified in their subject.[82]

Giorgio Vasari oversaw the renovations at each church. To this end, he designed aedicular frames that were of identical size and design, and enlisted the stable of "corporate" artists trained at the Accademia del Disegno to execute sylistically cohesive altarpieces, each depicting a scene from Christ's Passion, which progressed in sequence from one altarpiece to

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[79] For the Accademia del Disegno up until the time of the *Riposo*, see Barzman 2000, ch. 1, "Cosimo de' Medici and the Foundation of the *Compagnia ed Accademia del Disegno*."

[80] For an overview of the renovations of the two churches, see Hall 1979; Waźbiński 1987.

[81] Marcia Hall argues that Cosimo's motivations for renovating the churches were almost certainly self-serving, as a means of asserting Medicean primacy by usurping control over Florence's most prominent churches and, in doing so, squelching the individualized patronage of powerful Florentine families. In renovating the churches according to uniform standards, Medicean and papal interests were in line. Cosimo may have hoped that his actions in pushing through Counter-Reformation measures would gain him favour with Pius IV, from whom he hoped to receive the crown of Grand Duchy of Florence; Hall 1979, pp. 8ff.

[82] Hall 1979, pp. 20-28.

the next.[83] Vasari discusses the renovations at some length in the *Vite*, in which he characterizes the undertaking as a project of modernization, stressing that the goal was to create "beauty" and "order."[84] But however Vasari envisioned the project, the ideal of a "unified" altarpiece programme was clearly in line with Counter-Reformation thinking: it suppressed individualized patronage, effectively shutting the door on possible excesses and abuses of religious art; and, it prioritized the role of the altarpiece as a means of communicating articles of faith.[85] Although the renovations at S. Croce and S. Maria Novella were not the first efforts to create a unified altarpiece programme, the consistency achieved at both churches was unprecedented. Carlo Borromeo's influential treatise on ecclesiastical architecture, *Instructionum fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae* (Milan, 1577) devotes several chapters to chapel design and altar images in which he proposes firm rules for the standardization of church interiors that owe much to the precedent set by the renovations undertaken at S. Maria Novella and S. Croce.[86]

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[83] Although Vasari claims in the *Vite* to have designed the frames for the altarpieces in both churches, for the second renovation at S. Croce, he delegated the task to Francesco da San Gallo. For the design of the frames, see Hall 1979, pp. 9-13. For the iconography of the altarpieces in the context of the Counter Reformation, see Lecchini Giovannoni 1996; Poma Swank 1997.

[84] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 2, pp. 1063-64.

[85] Hall 1979, ch. 1, "Church Renovation in a Counter-Reformation Context." For coordinated altarpiece programmes, see Humfrey 1990, pp. 201ff.; Knox 2000.

[86] For a translation of Borromeo's text, see Voelker 1977, ch. XV, "Details Common to Both Major and Minor Chapels of Altars," and ch. XVII, "Sacred Images and Pictures;" and, more briefly, Voelker 1988. As the Counter Reformation began to take shape by the end of the century, the defensive stance regarding religious art gave way to the unapologetic deployment of images as key instruments in asserting the primacy of the Catholic Church and explicating key articles of faith. In the monumental new churches of the religious orders, Il Gesù, and the Chiesa Nuova, the Jesuits and the Oratorians used strictly controlled decorative programs that subordinated altarpieces to a governing thematic and aesthetic unity, thus ensuring clarity and thoroughness above all. At St Peter's, the ecclesiastical historian, Cardinal Cesare Baronio devised an iconographically complex programme that would

The Christological programmes implemented at S. Maria Novella and S. Croce represented a decisive move toward Counter-Reformation policies when it came to altarpiece patronage and design; but for Borghini and his readership, conditioned by the more restrictive artistic climate of the two decades since Trent, many of these altarpieces were nevertheless found to be indecorous or to have critical lapses in their fidelity to scripture. Borghini eschews Gilio's choleric diatribes and Paleotti's admonitions in favour of a spirited geniality; however, his position on religious art is essentially the same. At the outset of Book I, Vecchietti establishes three criteria for religious art: that inventions remain faithful to scripture; that painters exercise prudence and judgment when adding to their inventions; and, that images remain modest so as to move the viewer to devotion and not to incite lascivious thoughts.[87] In order to illustrate these rules, he continues with an extended criticism of Pontormo's frescoes at S. Lorenzo, the scandalous local equivalent to Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*.[88] In the ensuing tour of Florentine churches, painters are repeatedly criticized for being more concerned with demonstrating their artistic ability than with the faithful depiction of sacred subjects, although, unlike Gilio, some leniency was extended when it came to

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encompass the entirety of the newly completed east end, and which would be carried out in a coherent manner by a team of stylistically conservative painters. For the unified programmes at Il Gesù, see Hibbard 1972; for the Chiesa Nuova, see Barbieri, Barchiesi, and Ferrara 1995; for the altarpieces of St Peter's see Chappell and Kirwin 1974; Rice 1997, pp. 7-38.

[87] Borghini 1584/1969, pp. 77-78: "Tre cose principalmente … la prima, che egli dee l'inventione dalla sacra scrittura derivante semplicemente, e puramente dipignere, come gli Evangelisti, ò altri Santi Dottori della Chiesa l'hanno scritta … la seconda, che con grandissima consideratione, e giudicio aggiungano l'invention loro; conciosiacosachè non ad ogni historia stia bene l'aggiungerlavi … la terza, e che sempre osservar deono nelle lor pitture, è honestà, la riverenza, e la divotione; accio chè i riguardanti in cambio di compugnersi à penitenza nel rimirare quelle, piu tosto non si commuovano a lascivia."

[88] Borghini 1584/1969, pp. 81ff. For a more thorough discussion of Borghini's critique of Pontormo in the context of artistic decline, see Sohm 2007, pp. 151-57.

(appropriate) embellishment. As in the *Dialogo*, these failings are attributed to the abuse of license, that is, the artist's prerogative to invent as guided by his judgment, and the consequent failure to observe decorum.[89] But unlike other commentators who followed Gilio, Borghini also reiterated his notion that license was permissible for certain genres of painting, and explicitly cited, with approval, Gilio's division of painting into history, poetic, and mixed genres.[90]

Throughout the tour of the Florentine churches, it is typically the sculptor, Sirigatti, who praises the artistic qualities and invention of the works discussed, regardless of scriptural inaccuracies or breaches of decorum, while Vecchietti judges them according to Tridentine criteria, and Michelozzi strikes a middle ground. For example, Bronzino's *Christ in Limbo* in the Zanchini chapel at S. Croce (fig. 63), which was one of the few altarpieces that pre-dated the renovations, is heavily criticized by Vecchietti for its breaches of decorum in Book I, but lauded by Sirigatti for its charm and beauty in Book II.[91] It even earns Michelozzi's unequivocal approval despite his expressed intent at the outset of the second tour to mitigate Sirigatti, who he describes as a "partisan of the painters" who would otherwise "praise them to the sky" regardless of their errors.[92] This is precisely the viewer response that Paleotti and other ecclesiastics sought to suppress, and one suspects they are the

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[89] Borghini 1584/1969, p.55ff.

[90] Borghini 1584/1969, p. 53: "Mi ricordo haver letto un dialogo di M. Giovan Andrea Gilio da Fabriano, nel quale egli dimostra molti errori de' pittori fatti nell'inventione … egli divide il pittore in tre maniere: in pittor poetico, in pittore historico, & in pittor misto, laqual divisione non mi dispiace."

[91] Borghini 1584/1969, pp. 109, 187.

[92] Borghini 1584/1969, p. 186: "Se alcun non favella, M. Ridolfo, come affezionato de' pittore, se ne andrà colle laudi loco insino al cielo."

target of a characteristically sardonic interjection from Valori, who quips that he is "delighted to gaze at these beauties that were given to us by the Supreme Donor of blessings ... as long as we look at them in an appropriate way," gently mocking the insistent protestations of Vecchietti that all images in churches be regarded in strictly religious terms.[93]

In one of the more well-known passages from the book, Vecchietti outright refuses to discuss Bronzino's similarly scandalous *Resurrection* altarpiece at the Annunziata (fig. 64), which positively teemed with artfully posed, idealized nudes, singling out for special censure an especially "lascivious" angel. Michelozzi acquiesces, but not before stating that "if I had that beautiful figure at home, I would value it greatly and hold it in high value as one of the most delicate and soft figures that it would be possible to see."[94] Just as Paleotti had described, Michelozzi's response transforms the altarpiece into a profane painting, which "serves only as entertainment." But in more practical terms, Michelozzi's remarks pithily sum up the predicament for painting at the time: what was unsuitable for a church context was unproblematic in a private setting, not simply because there were none of the formal and iconographical constraints imposed by liturgy and decorum, but because, in the context of a collection, what mattered was precisely its art.

As a whole, the interlocutors' tour of Florentine churches is characterized by a checklist-like approach, as they appraise the altarpieces according to straightforward, visual

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[93] Borghini 1584/1969, p. 187: "Io mi compiaccio à rimirar quelle bellezze … che à noi dal sommo donatore di tutti i beni furono donate, perché con mezi convenevoli le rimirassimo: e considero à cosi gran dono quanto al donatore siamo obligate;" translated in Borghini/Ellis 2002, p. 392.

[94] Borghini 1584/1969, p.116: "S'io havessi cotesta bella figura in casa … io la estimerei molto, e ne terrei gran conto per una delle più delicate, e morbide figure, che veder si possano;" translated in Borghini/Ellis 2002, p. 324.

criteria: first according to their propriety and fidelity to biblical sources, then according to their artistry, although the discussants' comments are limited mostly to brief and oftentimes inconsequential observations concerning beauty, poses, and colour. Unlike Vasari, Borghini does not address the question of style (personal, regional, period, or otherwise) nor did he attempt to describe the paintings in an ekphrastic manner that would provide the reader with an overall sense of their content or their visual impact. Rather the matter-of-fact quality of Borghini's observations as expressed by his interlocutors seems consistent with his status as a non-practitioner writing for an audience of fellow connoisseurs, for whom, a workable, if perfunctory, vocabulary sufficed to participate in the judgment of art as a social activity.[95]

While the *Riposo* was still heavily informed by post-Tridentine ideas about subject and decorum – and accordingly was concerned almost exclusively with religious art – Borghini's viewer-oriented approach signals a transition toward a new type of discourse that would emerge in the next century to address the more practical needs of the growing ranks of art collectors. Whereas Gilio's generous attitude toward secular art may have seemed disingenuous amidst his condemnations of contemporary painting, Borghini's insistence that the rules of decorum be observed according to genre ultimately underscored the value of private collections as repositories of art that were unencumbered by the same constraints that had to be observed in churches. Indeed the vigorous and detailed descriptions of the collections of Vecchietti and Sirigatti that introduce the *Riposo* – which are all the more remarkable precisely because they are almost completely incongruous with the ensuing

[95] For the increasing authority of non-practitioners by the end of the century, see Barocchi 1979, pp. 33-35; De Benedictis 1998, pp. 108ff.

discussion of religious art – suggest something of where Borghini's real predilections lay.[96] The *Riposo* rather indicates just how much the separation between sacred and secular forms of painting entailed in the post-Tridentine reformation of religious art was propitious for art collecting.

IV. The Picture Gallery

In the concluding paragraph of a letter written sometime during the 1610s to Teodoro Ameyden in response to a request for advice on matters of painting, Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani enthusiastically describes the art scene in Rome:

> The profession of painting today is at the peak of esteem, not only for the usual things that come onto the Roman market, but also for what is sent forth to Spain, France, Flanders, England, and elsewhere. In truth it is marvellous to contemplate the great number of ordinary painters, and many persons who maintain large and populous studios, who also get ahead, solely on the basis of being able to paint in various ways and with inventiveness. And this is not only in Rome and in Venice, but in other parts of Italy. Also in Flanders and in France recently they have begun to adorn palaces with paintings as a variation from the sumptuous wall hangings that were used in the past.[97]

By the early seventeenth century, Rome had become the centre of a pan-European art market that was strong enough to sustain the livelihoods of the increasing number of artists

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[96] Borghini 1584/1969, pp. 12-25.

[97] Vincenzo Giustiniani to Teodoro Ameyden: "[La] professione di pittura, la quale al dì d'oggi è in colmo di estimazione, non solo per quanto porta l'uso di Roma ordinario, ma anco per mandare fuori in Spagna, Francia, Fiandra e Inghilterra, ed altre parti; che in vero è cosa degna maraviglia il considerare il gran numero de' pittori ordinari, e di molte persone che tengono casa aperta con molta famiglia, anche con fare avanzo, solo col fondamento dell'arte di dipignere con diverse maniere ed invenzioni, non solo in Roma, in Venezia, ed in altre parti d'Italia, ma anco in Fiandra ed in Francia modernamente si è messo in uso di parare i palazzi compitamente co' quadri, per andare variando l'uso de' paramenti sontuosi usati per il passato, massime in Spagna, e nel tempo dell'estate; e questa nuova usanza porge anco gran favore allo spaccio dell'opere de' pittori, ai quali ne dovrà risultare alla giornata maggior utile per l'avvenire, se il signore Iddio conserva per sua benignità quella pace che da tutti continuamente si deve desiderare;" quoted in Bottari and Ticozzi 1922-25, vol. 6, pp. 121-29; translated in Enggass and Brown 1970, pp. 16-20.

congregating in the city, who ranged from highly successful painters running large workshops to the more numerous ranks of painters who produced modest works in a wide variety of genres. As Giustiniani explains, the practice of collecting paintings en masse for display in private residences was the driving force behind these changes. As owner of one of the largest and most renowned galleries in the city, Giustiniani was not only a witness, but a key participant in these developments.[98] But what is most striking about the letter is his sheer enthusiasm, which conveys just how new and revolutionary these developments were.

The picture gallery developed tentatively in the latter half of the sixteenth century as the practical outcome of the increasing self-sufficiency of practices of collecting vis-à-vis functional and decorative modes of ownership. The gallery was a new type of domestic space that was independent from traditional sites of display, in which paintings were devised to complement their surroundings or arranged according to their generic function.[99] The practical and financial obstacles to building galleries (either in new constructions or renovations of large palaces and villas), however, meant that they did not start to appear in significant numbers until the 1610s.

In 1615, Vincenzo Scamozzi endeavoured to explain their typological origins in the *Idea dell'architettura*. He identified two principal sources for the *galleria*: the classical loggia, which had been the customary site of display in antiquity; and its more recent derivation, the French *galerie*, a heavily decorated, enclosed promenoir.[100] With its

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[98] For the picture collections of Vincenzo Giustiniani, see Salerno 1960; Danesi Squarzina 2001.

[99] On the development of the gallery in Italy, see Settis 1983; Prinz 1988; De Benedictis 1998.

[100] Vincenzo Scamozzi, *Dell'idea dell'architettura universale* (Venice, 1615), p. 305: "Oggidì si usano molto a Roma e a Genova e in altre città d'Italia quel genere di fabbriche che si dicono Gallerie,

classicizing, multi-media scheme, the most opulent of the French galleries, Francis I's famed Galerie at Fontainebleau, which had been outfitted by Rosso Fiorentino, Francesco Primaticcio and other Italians during the 1530s, proved to be influential for early Italian adaptations.[101] The French model was first deployed in Italy at the Galleria degli Stucchi of the Palazzo Capodiferro-Spada in Rome, designed by Giulio Mazzoni in 1559, and reached its apotheosis with Cardinal Odoardo Farnese's celebrated gallery at the Palazzo Farnese, with its antique statues surmounted by Annibale Carracci's epic, mythological ceiling.[102]

But the idea of an independent space dedicated to display soon suggested itself to other purposes, for the gallery also came to be understood as repository for art collections, thereby assuming the duties traditionally performed by the *studiolo* and other private chambers where paintings customarily were hung. The most well-known of these early galleries was the Tribuna, which was established in 1583 by Francesco I de' Medici as the centrepiece of the antiquarian and portrait collections that had recently been installed in the corridors of the upper floor of the Uffizi, the newly completed Medicean administrative centre.[103] Significantly, it was founded on the heels of Francesco's project for his own *studiolo* in the Palazzo Vecchio, which was decorated with a cycle of paintings devised by

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forse per esser state introdotte prima nella Gallia e Francia per trattenersi a passegio i personaggi nelle corti; le proporzioni loro si cavano dalle logge, ma sono alquanto meno aperte di esse. Questa sorte di edifici fu parimenti appresso agli antichi;" quoted in De Benedictis 1998, pp. 236-37. For the typology of the gallery in France, see Guillaume 1994

[101] For the diffusion of the French style in Italy, see Prinz 1988, ch. III, "La galleria di Francesco I a Fontainebleau e le prime gallerie italiane."

[102] Cf. Mosco 1982.

[103] On the founding of the Tribuna, see Conti 1980; Barocchi 1983; Barocchi and Bertelà 2002, vol. 1, ch. III, "Francesco I e la Galleria: dal Corridoio alla Tribuna 1581-1587."

Vincenzo Borghini intended to complement the scientific pursuits to which study was primarily devoted.[104] The Tribuna gallery, on the other hand, served as a public showcase for the Medici's riches, and by extension, their power and authority.[105] In accordance with Vasarian ideals of Tuscan pre-eminence in the arts, the 1589 inventory of the Tribuna documents a near-exclusive concentration of early-sixteenth-century paintings by Raphael, Leonardo, Sarto, and Pontormo, including four of Pierfrancesco Borgerhini's celebrated bedroom panels – since immortalized by Vasari – which were dismantled and acquired by the Medici in 1584.[106] The clear separation of duties involved in Francesco I's dual plans for the *studiolo* and Tribuna entailed a fundamental distinction between the private study and the public gallery and the role of art within each.[107] But it is also important to note that in early configurations of the Tribuna's continually evolving collections, the encyclopaedic array of curiosities and precious objects also on display were more akin to an exalted *kunstkammer* than the idealized amalgamation of works of art represented in Johann Zoffany's famous painting of 1772-78.[108] Of the 680 items listed in the 1589 inventory, there are only 30

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[104] For the *studiolo* of Francesco I, see De Benedictis 1998, pp. 36-38; Feinberg 2002.

[105] Cf. Barocchi 1979, pp. 28-29.

[106] For this and subsequent inventories of the Tribuna, see Bertelà 1997 as well as the useful appendix in *Mostra Storica della Tribuna* 1970, pp. 31-39, which traces the installation of specific paintings across key inventories.

[107] For the growing dichotomy between private and public sites of display during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, see Findlen 1989, pp. 68ff.

[108] Indeed, the composition of the 1589 inventory exemplifies the near contemporaneous document, "How a Kunstkammer Should be Formed," a brief set of guidelines for princely collecting composed by Gabriel Kaltemarckt in 1587 for the newly crowned elector of Saxony, Christian I. Kaltemarckt urged the elector to put more emphasis on picture collecting, in the manner of other rulers such as Francis I, Henry VIII, and Maximillian I and Maximillian II, although he carefully justified his recommendations according to Lutheran values, in which art would have a didactic or moral function.

paintings. Otherwise the walls filled with display cabinets and other furnishings. Indeed, Francesco Bocchi's guide to Florence, *Le bellezze di Firenze* (Florence, 1591), mentions the paintings in the Tribuna only after a lengthy description of its architecture and lavish decoration.[109] By contrast, Bocchi begins his description of Francesco's comparatively modest residence at the Casino di S. Marco (then belonging to his son, Don'Antonio) by remarking on its vast quantities of expertly arranged art.[110] The 1588 post-mortem inventory of the Casino's small gallery confirms that it was densely and exclusively filled with paintings and small sculptures attesting to Francesco's awareness of more modern attitudes toward to art collecting.[111]

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Studies of early modern art collecting stress that the autonomy of the picture gallery and the attendant suppression of the function of its constituent objects distinguish art collections from earlier forms of ownership. Victor Stoichita defines the picture collection as a "closed system," which he likens to a "superframe" that segregates the works within from competing contexts and establishes a network of contextual relationships between them.[112] Similarly, Krzysztof Pomian argues that the fundamental outcome of any form of collecting is to

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Gutfleisch and Menzhausen 1989.

[109] Bocchi 1591, p.53.

[110] Bocchi 1591, p. 6: "Son in questo palazzo stanze divisate con mirabile arte, in tanto numero, & con magnificenza tanto regia, che dentro ogni gran Principe habitar pute adagiato commodamente."

[111] Cf. Conti 1980, pp. 246-48 on the holdings of the Tribuna vis-à-vis the Casino di S. Marco. The 1588 inventory of the Casino di S. Marco is recorded in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 136.

[112] Stoichita 1999, ch. 6, "The Intertextual Machine."

subordinate use value in favour of signifying value thereby transforming functional objects into meaningful ones.[113] Pomian calls these objects "semiophores" and maintains, as did Cardinal Paleotti, that the viewer determined whether an object was useful (devotional) or meaningful (aesthetic), stressing that "no object can possibly be simultaneously thing and semiophore for the same observer."[114] Such studies, which intersect with the broader concerns of visual culture, provide crucial insights into the ways collections can create meaning and reinforce societal structures. But it is also important to note that in the early seventeenth century, with the picture gallery still very much in its infancy, traditional attitudes toward domestic display persisted alongside newer ideas of connoisseurship and collecting.

Indeed, counter-reformation attitudes toward domestic art as espoused by Paleotti in the 1580s enjoyed great currency even within the development of picture collecting.[115] This sort of devotional collecting was instrumental to the 1618 founding of the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan by Cardinal Federico Borromeo. Borromeo, who had been the first cardinal protector of the Accademia di S. Luca in Rome, donated his collection to the city of Milan in order to establish a museum and academy, in which paintings he believed to be exemplary stimuli for devotional meditation would be preserved and made available for artists to emulate in their own works.[116] Even in private collecting, devotional modes of

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[113] Pomian 1990, ch. 1, "The Collection between the Visible and the Invisible."

[114] Pomian 1990, p. 30.

[115] Bonfait 1994; Jones 1999; Brown 2001.

[116] Borromeo began construction on the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in 1603, which was intended to make his books and manuscripts available to the public. Sometime after 1611, plans were also underway for

viewership were common. For example, in several seventeenth-century inventories of the collections of the Mattei family, who counted among Rome's wealthiest families and most prominent collectors, paintings throughout the palace are simply divided into categorizes of sacred and profane: "Quadri di devotione" (devotional paintings); and "Quadri di ritratti et altre cose" (portraits and other subjects).[117] At the same time, devotionally minded collectors were not oblivious to concurrent developments in picture collecting; the Mattei inventories also demonstrate a concerted effort to separate rare and esteemed pictures – usually in semi-public rooms such as salons – from the more general accretion of images that filled the rooms and corridors of *palazzo* (indeed there were few walls left bare in a typical seventeenth-century *palazzo*).[118]

This tension between religious and aesthetic approaches to collecting is evident in the separate collections maintained by the papal banker, Vincenzo Giustiniani, and his brother, Cardinal Benedetto, at their shared palace in Rome.[119] The 1621 post-mortem inventory of

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a new building to house the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, comprising an artists' academy as well as the cardinal's own collection of paintings and drawings. For Borromeo's views on the spiritual purpose of art, see Jones 1988. On Borromeo and the Ambroisana, see Jones 1993.

[117] The collections of Cardinal Girolamo and Ciriaco Mattei are known principally through the inventories of Ciriaco's son, Giovan Battista Mattei, taken in 1616, two years after Ciriaco's death, and his own post-mortem inventory of 1624. The inventories are transcribed in Cappelletti and Testa 1994, pp. 173-76, 181-87. The Mattei were among the devout circle affiliated with the confraternity of SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini, who have received considerable scholarly attention in recent years due to their patronage of Caravaggio. The inventories of the other collectors in the circle, most notably, Olimpia Aldobrandini and Ottavio Costa also list religious subjects almost exclusively (notwithstanding the usual assortment of portraits); Richards 2011.

[118] On the constitution of seventeenth-century inventories in general, see Ago 2002; Cavazzini 2004; Goldthwaite 2004; Cecchini 2005; Ago 2006, ch. VI, "I quadri;" Cavazzini 2008, ch. 3, "The Diffusion of Painting;" *Dalle collezioni romane* 2008.

[119] Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani's post-mortem inventory of his apartments in the family palace, which was drawn up in March 1621, is transcribed in Danesi Squarzina 1997/1998; Vincenzo

Benedetto's collection lists around three hundred paintings and prints almost entirely comprised of religious subjects and disposed throughout his apartments, indicating that devotional criteria took precedence in the formation of his collection. The cardinal owned works by contemporary artists including the Carracci, Giovanni Lanfranco, Jan Brueghel the Elder, and Jusepe de Ribera as well as early Christian artefacts. Yet his idiosyncratic predilection for the placid devotional paintings of the early-sixteenth-century Bolognese artist, Francesco Francia, who is represented by eight paintings in the collection, suggests something of the propriety of Benedetto's tastes. Even a rare secular subject, such as Giovanni Baglione's *Divine Love Conquering Earthly Love*, which earned the artist a prestigious gold chain from the cardinal, is overwhelmingly chaste and overtly moralizing in its content, in intentional contrast with Caravaggio's provocatively smiling *Victorious Cupid*, the prize of his brother's collection.[120] Vincenzo, on the other hand, was renowned for his knowledge of painting and progressive tastes. He was among Caravaggio's earliest and foremost champions; in 1606, he undertook a tour of Germany, Flanders, England, and France accompanied by Cristoforo Roncalli in order to view the view most celebrated works of Northern Europe; during the 1610s and 1620s, he housed northern artists associated with the Caravaggist movement including Nicholas Regnier, David De Haen, and Dirck

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Giustiniani's post-mortem inventory of February 1638 appears in Salerno 1960. See also Pamela Jones's comparison of the collecting habits of Cardinals Federico Borromeo, Francesco Maria del Monte, and Benedetto Giustiniani, all of whom owned paintings by Caravaggio: whereas Giustiniani and Borromeo favoured religious and moralizing themes almost exclusively, Del Monte, who was a career functionary, collected paintings from contemporary artists across a variety of genres; Jones 2004a; Jones 2004b.

[120] For the rivalrous relationship between Caravaggio and Baglione, see Röttgen 1993. As Joachim Sandrart, who lived at the Palazzo Giustiniani during the 1630s, would later recollect, Vincenzo kept hidden Caravaggio's *Victorious Cupid* behind a green curtain to be revealed to visitors only once they had seen the rest of the collection so as not to overshadow the other works; Enggass 1967, p. 13

Baburen;[121] and from the 1630s until his death in 1637, he was preoccupied with the publication on the *Galleria Giustiniani* (Rome, 1636), a monumental two-volume compilation of engravings after his famous sculpture collection.[122] Accordingly, the 1638 post-mortem inventory of Vincenzo's collection, which lists over six hundred paintings including those bequeathed by Benedetto, reveals a more decisive orientation towards art collecting. Vincenzo concentrated his holdings in three rooms devoted exclusively to his collection of paintings, with the most celebrated works grouped in the "*Stanza grande de quadri antichi*." There paintings by Raphael, Titian, Andrea del Sarto, Giorgione, and Veronese hung alongside those of Caravaggio and the Carracci. Baglione's *Divine Love*, on the other hand, was consigned to a minor gallery.

It is important to pay attention to such distinctions when dealing with seventeenth-century collectors. Not simply because they are too often treated as an undifferentiated group whose presumed motivations for acquiring paintings align with modern notions of art collecting. Nor is it to diminish the significance of genuinely innovative collectors, such as Vincenzo Giustiniani, by acknowledging the persistence of function-oriented modes of display. But rather it underscores just how palpable the distinctions between sacred and secular forms of collecting must have been at the time. That is to say, collectors made very deliberate and informed decisions about what types of works they wanted to acquire and display, and in doing so, changed the practice of looking at art. Whereas the interlocutors of

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[121] On Giustiniani's patronage of Northern artists, see Danesi Squarzina 1996; Lemoine 1999/2000.

[122] The first volume was prepared between 1631 and 1635, and circulated in a limited "private" edition in 1636. The second volume, which must have been well underway by that time, was released sometime before early 1637. On the *Galleria Giustiniani*, see Cropper 1992.

Borghini's *Riposo* visited Florence's churches to discuss precepts of painting, their seventeenth-century counterparts were more likely to gather in galleries and salons. In the more restrictive climate of the Counter Reformation – which, under the papacy of Clement VIII (1592-1605), called for more rigorous policing of existing religious images as well as a more strictly didactic approach that was implemented in the myriad projects that were undertaken in anticipation of the 1600 Jubilee[123] – semi-public collections were ideally suited for demonstrations of status and taste. It is not that the relevance of public religious art had been diminished (one need only recall the church projects of Caravaggio, Annibale Carracci, Barocci, and Bernini, which continued to attract throngs of artists and connoisseurs) – at least not for most of the duration of the seventeenth century – so much as picture collecting had developed its own discursive and economic autonomy.

V. Giulio Mancini's *Considerazioni sulla pittura:* Picture Collecting and the Demand for Art

Whereas in previous centuries, it had typically been the expansive (and expensive) projects of

[123] Almost immediately after being elected pope, on 8 June 1592, Clement VIII announced that he would undertake pastoral visits. He was the first pope to personally inspect churches, which he intended as an example for cardinals and bishops, who had only sporadically conducted pastoral visits even after it was officially called for in the Tridentine decrees. For Clement VIII's pastoral visits, see Beggiao 1978; Zuccari 1984, ch. 1, "La visita pastorale di Clemente VIII e il dibattito sulle immagini." Similarly Clement's artistic patronage would set an example for cardinals who were expected to renovate and restore their titular churches. Under the papacy of Clement VIII, the ecclesiastical historian, Cardinal Cesare Baronio, helped give rise to the "Early Christian" movement, which sought to promote continuity with the early Christian Church and revive its practices, which were believed to be purer and less corrupt. This programme was implemented in the iconography of the decoration of new St Peter's and other major Roman churches such as the Lateran. Although Clementine patronage has generated considerable art historical interest, especially in recent years, the aesthetic merits of such projects still have yet to find an advocate. For Baronio and the patronage of Clement VIII, see, for example, Chappell and Kirwin 1974; Abromson 1981; Herz 1988; Freiberg 1995. For similar currents in Venice, where Clement's initiatives were ratified at the Synod in Venice called by Lorenzo Priuli in 1592, see Hochmann 1992, ch. 1, "La réglementation de l'église et la théorie de l'art."

the Church and aristocracy that set the standard for others to follow, in the seventeenth century, the burgeoning influence of collecting challenged long-standing hierarchies of painting. Accordingly, men of comparatively modest means became influential taste-makers alongside members of the upper echelons of Roman society. The authority claimed by connoisseurs arose from the collections they assembled, the collectors they advised, and the artists they promoted.[124]

Giulio Mancini's *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, which was compiled in Rome from 1618 to 1621, emerged from virtual standstill of late sixteenth-century artistic discourse: on the one hand, treatises by painters such as Giovan Paolo Lomazzo and Federico Zuccaro teased longstanding tenets of art theory into ever more esoteric formulations; while on the other, post-Tridentine writers such as Paleotti, and Borromeo, categorically denounced artistic virtuosity and creative license in an effort to reform images in both the public and private realms.[125] The *Considerazioni* was not the first treatise written by a non-practitioner, but it was the first to deal explicitly with the practical concerns of picture collecting, a topic of some urgency at a time when there was little to guide collectors in managing their burgeoning holdings.[126] Although it was never published, manuscript copies circulated

[124] For the rise of the connoisseur in the seventeenth century, see Gibson-Wood 1988; Fumaroli 1994.

[125] In the *Trattato dell'arte de la pittura* (Milan, 1584) and *Idea del tempio della pittura* (Milan, 1590), Lomazzo presents an unifying theory of painting, which draws from neoplatonism, cosmology, and numerology, and other sources to establish universal rules for achieving the perfection of the cosmos. In the *Idea de' pittori, scultori ed architetti* (Turin, 1607), Zuccaro, who draws instead from Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas, is similarly preoccupied with the problem of how to transmit an idea of divine origins (*disegno interno*) into physical form (*disegno esterno*).

[126] On the *Considerazioni*, see Salerno 1956-57; De Benedictis and Roani 2005.

among Rome's collectors and connoisseurs.[127]

Mancini, who had studied medicine at the University of Padua, arrived in Rome in 1592 at the behest of the Sienese nobleman, Agostino Chigi, the rector of the hospital of S. Maria della Scala in Siena and himself a distinguished collector.[128] Once in Rome, Mancini frequented elite circles – he would eventually be appointed as the personal physician to Urban VIII in 1623 – but his limited personal wealth meant that he engaged mostly with the art market, buying moderately sized easel paintings by moderately successful contemporary artists.[129] Some three thousand extant letters to his brother, Cardinal Deifebo, who resided in Siena, provide a rich chronicle of the Roman art scene during this crucial period.[130] With a business-minded acumen, Mancini documented the movement of works bought and sold on the market, especially as they related to the value of his own collection (he shrewdly kept his paintings in Siena in order to prevent his collection from being picked over by acquisitive and more titled collectors who could take advantage of his obeisance).

Mancini makes his priorities clear at the outset of the *Considerazioni*: "My intention is not to propose precepts pertinent to painting or its practices since this is not my profession

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[127] A copy was known to have been in the possession of the renowned collector, Cassiano dal Pozzo, an aide in the court of Urban VIII. For the manuscript copies of the *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, see Marucchi 1956-57; on its critical fortune, see Salerno 1956-57, pp. xxxi-xxxii; Mahon 1971.

[128] For Mancini's biography, see Salerno 1956-57; Maccherini 2004; and Sparti 2008. For Agostino Chigi, see Sani 2000. The post-mortem inventory of his collection is published in Mignosi Tantillo 2000.

[129] On Mancini's activities as a collector and dealer, see Maccherini 1990-93; Maccherini 2005. There is no recorded inventory of Mancini's own collection, save for a cursory list of approximately two dozen paintings recorded in the 1620 sale of his paintings to the Sienese painter and art dealer, Michelangelo Vanni; Maccherini 1997, p. 86.

[130] For Mancini's correspondence, see Maccherini 1990-93; Maccherini 1997; Maccherini 1999.

... but to propose and consider various methods by which a dilettante ("*un huomo di diletto*") of similar learning can easily pass judgment on paintings, buy them, collect them, and display them."[131] In Mancini's schema, judgment was based on purely visual criteria such as colour, proportion, perspective, and expression, qualities, he argued, that could be adequately evaluated by "a man of intellect" without necessarily having knowledge of the requisite skills involved.[132] Matters of invention and subject – core concerns of art theory since Alberti – are deemed extraneous to painting in its purest sense, which is defined by Mancini as "no more than the imitation of things," and thus could be judged by untrained observers.[133] He further explains that being removed from the practice of painting, made amateurs objective, and thus, *better* judges of painting than painters themselves, whose own judgment, he argues, was too clouded by the creative process.[134] Mancini was almost certainly being polemical in his

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[131] Mancini 1956-57, vol. 1, p. 5: "L'intenzion mia non è di proporre precetti appartenenti alla pittura o suo modo d'operare, sì per non esser mia professione, come ancor per esserne stato trattato dal Dureto e Gaurico ne' lor libri della proportion del corp'humano, e, doppo d'essi, dal Vinci, Vasari, Lomazzo et ultimamente dal Zuccharo, huomini eminentissimi in tal professione, ma si ben di proporre e considerare alcuni avvertimenti, per i quali un huomo di diletto di simili studij possa con facilità giuditio delle pitture propostegli, saperle comprar, acquistar et collocarle ai lor luoghi, secondo i tempi ne' quali sono state fatte, le materie che rappresentano et lumi che l'artefice gl'ha dato nel farle."

[132] Mancini 1956-57, vol. 1, p. 6: " Perché un huomo civile, per complimento di sua civiltà dovendo imparar a disegniare com'insegna Aristotile nel luogo citato et altri che scrivono dell'institution civile, con questa facoltà di saper dessegnare acquista questo giuditio."

[133] Mancini 1956-57, vol. 1, p. 6: "Onde questo nostro perito, per mezzo di saper disegnare, con la peritia e cognition universale dell'altre cose, potrà dar giuditio delle pitture: tanto più ch'è vero che al dar giuditio sia util il saper operar quelle tal cose, ma però non è commune nè necessario, nè in tutte l'artificiose et in particulare nella pittura; perché questa, non essendo altro ch'un'immitatione delle cose che si ritrovano in questo mondo che sono da più persone riconosciute e giudicate, come l'artificiose dall'artifice che le fa."

[134] Mancini 1956-57, vol.1, pp. 8-9: "Onde il pittor, non havendo l'habito della prudenza come disse Ficino con il quale si deve giudicare, e non considerando internamente la natura delle cose immitate, non puol dar perfetto giuditio della pittura; e ciò perché quest'habito pittoresco, come l'altri habiti artificiosi, è nella fantasia e in essa riserbato, e l'atto poi di giudicarli, messo in atto esternamente, appartiene all'intelletto con la sua prudenza, sapienza, et intelligenza." For the authority claimed by

retrogressive assessment of the intellective aspects of painting, for his ultimate agenda was to stake out the authority of connoisseurs in matters of art.

Although the bulk of the *Considerazioni* is devoted to the discussion of periods and schools (and included a much needed update to Vasari, which was by that time fifty years out of date), the most original chapters concern such practical topics as attribution, pricing, framing, hanging, and counterfeits. In the "Rules for Buying, Locating, and Conserving Paintings," Mancini largely adheres to traditional practices of organizing paintings by location according to their subject;[135] however, where there is an abundance of paintings, he proposes the gallery as a place where paintings of any subject could be hung. [136] In other words, the gallery would be a distinct space independent from considerations of function and decorum. Instead, Mancini introduces a new, connoisseurial element in their place: he encourages his reader to first classify their paintings according to period and school schools (Northern, Lombard, Tuscan, and Roman) so that they can be compared with each other according to their pictorial qualities. This provided the viewer with the opportunity to demonstrate their judgment, an enjoyable activity in itself, and to hone their connoisseurial skill, a necessity when dealing with the often-unscrupulous art market.[137] This was pastime

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Mancini and other connoisseurs vis-à-vis painters, see especially Fumaroli 1994.

[135] Mancini 1956-57, ch. X, "Regole per comprare collocare e conservare le pitture," vol. 1, pp. 139-48.

[136] Mancini 1956-57, vol. 1, p. 144: "Ma quando questi luoghi non bastino per l'abbondanza delle pitture, allhora, perché con questa abbondanza di pitture vi è la ricchezza et commodità d'edificare, si potrà fare una galleria in luogo commodo e di lume et aria buona ... in quella si porran tutte le pitture che saranno avanzate alle sale e camere, e collocarle secondo le materie, il modo del colorito, il tempo nel quale sono state fatte e della schuola secondo la quale sono state condotte."

[137] For the gallery as a site of sociable viewing, see Bury 2003; Gage 2008.

that Mancini practiced himself. In November 1608, Mancini organized a *paragone* between his *St John the Evangelist* by Caravaggio and a recently acquired painting of *St John the Baptist* by Annibale Carracci, the foremost proponents of what Mancini would identify in the *Considerazioni* as the two of the leading schools of contemporary art.[138]

To be sure, Mancini's expositive guidelines for arranging pictures, which were dictated less by personal taste than representativeness, were not widely emulated by his contemporaries. However, one suspects that Mancini's appreciation of paintings of diverse schools and periods had much to do with his commercial interests in the art market. Indeed, while Mancini clearly prized his painting by Caravaggio, his expressed views toward the artist's works ranged from apprehensive praise to outright condemnation. But with Caravaggio among the most sought-after artists of the day, his paintings were as prestigious as they were profitable. Mancini paid close attention to the prices fetched by other paintings by the artist in order to gauge the rapidly appreciating value of his *St John the Evangelist*, which he had purchased for only five *scudi* presumably sometime before 1599 when Caravaggio shot to fame with the unveiling of the lateral paintings for the Contarelli chapel in S. Luigi dei Francesi.[139] And, as will be discussed in the next chapter, when a rare opportunity arose to acquire one of Caravaggio's altarpieces, Mancini pursued the matter with a single-minded determination.

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[138] Maccherini 1997, doc. 13; Mancini 1956-57, vol. 1, pp. 108-11.

[139] In a letter of June 1613, Mancini reports that Caravaggio's *Fortune Teller*, a later variant of the Del Monte painting owned by the Vittrice family, had been sold for 300 *scudi*, a hefty sum for such a modest-sized genre painting. Based on this amount, he concludes that the *St John the Evangelist*, which he had acquired for 5 *scudi* sometime before 1606, when the painting was shipped to Siena for safekeeping, should be worth 150 *scudi*. The painting is among Caravaggio's lost works. Maccherini 1997, doc. 25.

In the introduction of the *Considerazioni*, Mancini declares that "paintings are not things of absolute necessity, but for pleasure, nor even less do they have a fixed standard of value."[140] Mancini, of course, was not talking about all types of paintings, but of those in picture collections. Unlike Vasari's anecdotes about contractual disputes that hint at the variability of fees paid to famous artists as discussed in Chapter 1, Mancini's remark belies his expertise as an art dealer. In drawing a relationship between painting's lack of utility and the variability of its pricing, he demonstrates a keen understanding of the economic workings of the art market. Philip Sohm points out that Mancini's comments are consonant with contemporary mercantile theory as described in Giovanni Domenico Peri's widely read *Il negotiante* (Genoa, 1638-51), in which goods are classified as either necessities ("*cose necessarie per il vito*"), whose prices should reflect their true cost of production, or luxuries ("*altre di commodità, ò d'ornamento e diletto*"), whose prices are determined by market forces.[141] For exceedingly rare goods, a list which significantly begins with painting and sculpture ("*una pittura d'Apelle, ò d'altro insigne pittore, una statua di Michel Angelo, ò d'altro celebre scultore*"), Peri further elaborates that prices depend solely on the esteem held for them by their respective owners and prospective buyers.[142] Mancini's comments gain even further consequence through the lens of Adam Smith's more thoroughgoing speculation on the inverse relationship between utility and price, which provides the basis for the *Wealth*

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[140] Mancini 1956-57, vol. 1, p. 9: "Perchè, non essendo le pitture cose di necessità assoluta, ma di diletto, né meno hanno misura necessaria di lor valore."

[141] Peri 1707, vol. 3, p. 26. Cf. Sohm 2011, pp. 12-13.

[142] Peri 1707, vol. 3, pp. 26-27: "Il prezzo conventionale essendo solamente circa cose rare, e preggiati, dipende dalla stima sola che di esse hanno chi le vende, e chi le compra."

of Nations (London, 1776), the foundational text of modern economic thought. To illustrate the paradoxical relationship between "value in use" and "value in exchange," Smith famously compared water to a diamond: "Nothing is more useful than water: but it will purchase scarce anything; scarce anything can be had in exchange for it. A diamond, on the contrary, has scarce any use-value; but a very great quantity of other goods may frequently be had in exchange for it."[143] In the seventeenth century, the same could be said of the paintings of the already-canonical sixteenth-century artists immortalized by Vasari and Dolce. With few exceptions, these paintings had been created to fulfil specific purposes or to complement specific sites. But as they were scooped up by collectors in pursuit of increasingly scarce artworks, their loss of function was inseparable from their dramatic rise in value.

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In socio-economic terms, the practice of collecting in the seventeenth century – which was not limited to works of art, but could encompass all manner of rare, precious, and cultured goods – was not unlike traditional forms of public patronage: status and wealth were demonstrated by acquiring rare and therefore expensive works by well-known contemporary artists and past masters.[144] However, the desire for exclusivity among wealthier collectors was made all the more acute by the concomitant proliferation of affordable prints and genre paintings that could be purchased for only a few *scudi* by middle- and even lower-class

[143] Smith 2003, p. 41.

[144] Goldthwaite 2004. See, for example, Roberta Piccinelli's discussion of the Gonzaga family's cultural rivalry with the Medici in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries and its impact on their collecting; Piccinelli 2000, pp. 13-45.

buyers in art markets that developed quickly in major centres throughout Italy .[145] Under these new circumstances, as Mancini explains in a 1612 letter, rarity (and thus price) took priority among the competitive collectors of early seventeenth-century Rome. He writes: "now [collectors] want rare works of quality and ordinary ones won't suffice… they need pricey ones." [146] While economies of scale, specialization, and fierce competition drove down prices for market-ready paintings, conversely, the price of works by past masters rose dramatically as the finite supply was necessarily insufficient to meet growing demand, especially when it came to artists of the High Renaissance.[147] Vasari and Dolce had provided collectors from across Italy and the rest of Europe with a readymade shopping-list of desirable art and they snapped up sixteenth-century paintings at an accelerating pace. Indeed, it is around this time that the concept of the "old master" painting developed (if not the term itself).[148] Already by 1602, Ferdinando de' Medici, acting under the auspices of the Accademia del Disegno, enacted an export law prohibiting the removal of paintings by eighteen past masters, in an effort stave off the flow of paintings out of Florence, even

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[145] For the development of art markets in various Italian centres, see, among others, Reinhardt 1998; Lorizzo 2003; Matthews-Grieco 2003; Murphy 2003; Goldthwaite 2004; Cecchini 2005. Patrizia Cavazzini's groundbreaking research on the Roman art collecting reveals that markets for inexpensive paintings in Rome were already well developed by the 1610s, although they typically catered to buyers who favoured more traditional sorts of religious and devotional works that would have likely still played a functional role; Cavazzini 2004. This point is taken up in the recent studies of the economic conditions of seventeenth-century painters compiled by Richard Spear and Philip Sohm, who point out that the majority of paintings sold in art markets were painted by now-unknown, and often poor, artists and sold for low prices; Sohm 2011, pp. 21ff.

[146] Quoted and translated in Spear 2011, p. 42.

[147] For the economic functioning of the art market in seventeenth-century Italy, see Goldthwaite 2003, and now, Spear and Sohm 2011.

[148] Cf. Shearman 1965, vol. 1, p. 170; Haskell 2000, pp. 1ff.

barring the transfer of works from the city to the countryside.[149] But significantly, an additional note at the end of the *practica* specifies that the decree did not apply to "portraits, nor landscapes, nor small paintings for the bedroom" nor did it include any works by "living painters."[150] That is to say that the new Florentine law strictly dealt with the prohibition of the export of the sorts of ambitious religious and narrative paintings that were most desirable to collectors.

And while many collectors also took a strong interest in their local patrimony, it must be emphasized just how circumscribed seventeenth-century tastes could be when it came to art of the past. The maturation of practices of collecting, along with the firming up of an accompanying discourse, helped to cultivate an expanded appreciation of diverse schools and new genres of art; however, with very few exceptions, collectors were scarcely interested in critically maligned works from the fifteenth century and earlier or even works by many of the artists who were active during the second half of the sixteenth century. As a result, even collectors armed with considerable political and financial resources were not immune to the limitations of supply.

In response to this growing disjunction between supply and demand, the business of

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[149] The document is transcribed in Emiliani 1996, doc. 6. The artists in question were Michelangelo, Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Domenico Beccafumi, Rosso, Leonardo, Franciabigio, Perino del Vaga, Pontormo, Titian, Francesco Salviati, Agnolo Bronzino, Daniele Volterra, Fra Bartolommeo, Sebastiano del Piombo, Filippo Lippi, Correggio, and Parmigianino.

[150] Emiliani 1996, doc. 6: "La prohibitione non abbracci li ritratti ne li quadri di paesi ne quadretti da mettere da capo al letto tanto che si fanno in Firenze quanto che fuori etc. non conceda manco il Luogotenente licenzia che possino portarsi pur in Villa. Non s'impediscino l'opere dei Pittori viventi come sopra."

making copies of famed works expanded rapidly to fill the gap.[151] Although less scrupulous merchants passed off counterfeits as originals (even going so far as to artificially age paintings with smoke or have them painted on old canvases),[152] copies had become a legitimate surrogate for unattainable works, and could even be valued for their own merits; both Giustiniani and Mancini spoke favourably of copies in their writings.[153] In aristocratic circles, collectors could still restrict the circulation of copies such that they still carried a prestige value and also possibly signified a privileged relationship with the owner of the original.[154] But even if a well-made replica could pass as an acceptable and even desirable substitute, there was no denying the allure of the original.[155] In a letter to his brother,

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[151] On the demand for copies in the seventeenth century, see, for example, Shearman 1965, vol. 1, pp. 170-71; Moir 1976, pp. 8ff; Spear 1989; Meloni Trkulja 1996.

[152] Giulio Mancini addressed the problem of counterfeiting in the *Considerazioni sulla pittura*. Mancini 1956-57, vol. 1, pp. 134-35.

[153] In his letter to Ameyden, Giustiniani recommends the practice of copying from other paintings, noting that it is possible for a well-made copy to surpass the original; for the letter, see p. 204 above. Similarly, in the *Considerazioni*, Mancini recalls an anecdote about Annibale Carracci, who, after having been deceived by a copy of Sebastiano's *Flagellation*, refers to Cosimo II's opinion that copies "were to be preferred to the originals for comprising two arts, both of the inventor and of the copier." Mancini 1956-57, vol. 1, pp. 134-35.

[154] For example, although Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici gave permission for copies of famous pictures to be made, he typically specified "that only single copies be taken and they be destined only for the person to whom he granted permission; Butters 2003. In 1613, Giulio Mancini commissioned a *Castigation of Cupid* from Bartolomeo Manfredi on behalf of Agostino Chigi after Cardinal del Monte had denied his request to have a copy made of Caravaggio's lost painting of the same subject, which Mancini claims, was originally promised to him; Maccherini 1997, p. 71, docs. 23, 24.

[155] The classic statement on the "aura" of authenticity in the early modern era remains Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction;" Benjamin 1968, pp. 219-53. For a brief overview of documentary evidence attesting to the concern for authenticity vis-à-vis originals and copies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Jeffrey Muller 1989. As Muller explains, it was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that positive attitudes toward copies emerged. Muller draws attention to a letter written by Filippo Baldinucci in 1681, which argues that copies are beneficial because they serve to disseminate the style of great artists. As would become apparent with the development of museums – and contrary to what was thought by early modern

Camillo, regarding various copies that he had sent to furnish the family residence at Pistoia, Giulio Rospigliosi, the future Pope Clement XI, remarks that copies enjoyed greater prestige outside of Rome, where "one couldn't see the original," clearly testifying to the value attached to authenticity by seventeenth-century collectors. [156] To this end, he advises Camillo regarding the copies in his own collection that if viewers "want to consider them originals, to let them do as they please."[157] Not to draw too fine a point on the matter, but Giulio's appraisal of the relative value of copies as well as his willingness to let visitors be deceived by his own copies, indicates that in the seventeenth century, authenticity was thought of less in terms of a Benjaminian sense of "empirical uniqueness" than according to the overriding economies of collecting.[158]

One gets a clear sense of the extent to which scarcity and power were already intermingled in the nascent art market in Cardinal Federico Borromeo's admonishment of "condescending and arrogant men" who would reject a fine copy regardless of its quality, which he concludes by warning that "human affairs are exceedingly unstable and that

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collectors – the widespread circulation of copies only enhanced the aura of the original.

[156] Giulio Rospigliosi to Camillo Rospigliosi, 12 September 1637: "Chi disse, che i due quadri di S.^{to} Andrea sono diverse maniere, non si è ingannanto; perché quello dove il S.^{to} è in atto di adorare la Croce viene da Guido Reni, et è in una di q.^{te} Chiese di S. Gregorio, e si stima delle belle cose che habbia fatto Guido, e Mons.^{re} Merlino che ha infinite Pitture belliss.^{me} ne tiene una Copia; però è tanto più da stimarsi fuori di Roma, dove non si vede l'originale;" Roberto 1992, doc. 4; cf. Levy 1997, p. 101.

[157] Giulio Rospigliosi to Camillo Rospigliosi, 12 September 1637: "Ho detto a V.S. quali siano le copie, a ciò lo sappia, ma è però bene il lasciare che chi vede, se vuol tenerle per originali, faccia quello che vuole;" Roberto 1992, doc. 4; cf. Levy 1997, p. 101.

[158] Benjamin 1968, p. 225, esp. note 6.

anything can collapse into ruin in all too brief a moment."[159] But a churchman's condemnations of the vanity of worldly pursuits mattered little to the worldly ambitions of seventeenth-century collectors. Within the constraints of such a tight and competitive market, acquiring a rare painting – particularly one of generous proportions and ambitious content – was an unmistakable demonstration of taste and status. And for those that wielded the most influence and resources, there yet remained an untapped resource: the Church.

[159] Borromeo 2010, p. 161.

Chapter 5. From the Church to the Gallery

I. The Late 16th Century: Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici's Acquisition of Andrea del Sarto's Annunciation Altarpiece

Over the course of the late-sixteenth and early seventeenth century, several conditions had aligned that would alter the way altarpieces were viewed and used by collectors: the Council of Trent had demarcated a clear separation between religious and artistic uses of art and imposed new restraints on lay patronage; amateurs and collectors assumed an unprecedented prominence in the discourse of art; and semi-private galleries in which paintings of all genres were displayed and viewed with a view to their aesthetic qualities proliferated in major Italian centres. None of these developments alone caused altarpieces to be removed from churches to private venues, yet each was necessary in order for the secularization of altarpieces to occur.

During the final two decades of the sixteenth century, altarpieces began, very tentatively, to make their way into private settings. In these few instances, the altarpieces in question were already privately held in domestic chapels. For example, Andrea del Sarto's *Holy Family* (fig. 65), which had been painted in the early 1520s for Zanobi Bracci's private chapel in his villa at Rovezzano, had already been removed, according to Vasari, by his son Antonio for use in his own residence, before it was sold to the Florentine collector, Jacopo Salviati, in 1580.[1] In 1589, Raphael's *Madonna dell'Impannata* (fig. 66) – originally a devotional painting that was owned by Bindo Altoviti before it was seized by Cosimo I in 1554 and re-purposed as an altarpiece – was moved from a chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio

[1] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 843. Salviati, in turn, had a copy made to replace it. Shearman 1965, no. 73, vol. 2, pp. 263-64. For Salviati's collection, see Fazzini 1993.

into the Tribuna.[2] And sometime before 1587 Don'Antonio de' Medici had acquired Botticelli's *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 67), which had been already been removed from S. Maria Novella during the renovations of the church undertaken by Vasari.[3] The altarpiece's then-owner, Don Flavio Arazzola da Mondragone, had it transferred to his newly completed palazzo, where he intended to install it in the chapel.[4] In September 1575, however, Mondragone fell out of favour with the Medici and was expelled from Florence, at which time the altarpiece came into the possession of Don'Antonio, who installed it rather in the gallery of the Casino di S. Marco as recorded in the inventory of 1588 where it hung alongside his substantial collection of religious images, landscapes, portraits, and mythologies.[5] Although Botticelli did not enjoy great critical favour during the late-sixteenth century, the *Adoration of the Magi* was nevertheless an important landmark of late-fifteenth-century Florentine painting, earning considerable praise in Vasari's *Vite*.[6] Significantly, Leonardo's incomplete altarpiece of the same subject and similar format (clearly modelled on the centralized, pyramidal composition of Botticelli's version), which had been preserved by Amerigo Benci after Leonardo had abandoned the commission, had also made its way into Don'Antonio's collection, where it is recorded in the same inventory in a room adjacent to

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[2] *Raffaello a Firenze* 1984, no. 14, pp. 166-74; Meyer zur Capellen 2005, no. 58, pp. 144-49.

[3] The altarpiece was originally commissioned from Botticelli around 1475 for Guasparre di Zenobio del Lama's funerary chapel in S. Maria Novella. The chapel had already passed to the Fedini family sometime before 1556, before it was acquired by Mondragone during the late 1560s. The chapel was subsequently dismantled as part of the massive renovation project being undertaken at the church (see ch. 4). On the history of the chapel, see Hall 1979, pp. 95-96.

[4] Lightbown 1978, p. 36.

[5] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 136, f. 154r.

[6] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 557-58.

the gallery (fig. 24).[7]

Among the first paintings known to have been purposefully removed from a church and put into a private collection was Andrea del Sarto's *Annunciation* lunette (fig. 68) from the Scala chapel in the Annunziata, which was acquired from the heirs of Giuliano Scala in 1580 under pressure from Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici.[8] There are no documents related to the transaction between Cardinal Ferdinando, the friars of the Annunziata, and the Scala family, so the circumstances of the acquisition remain unclear. In a bookkeeping entry of 12 May 1584 recording of the arrival of the *Annunciation* at the Villa Medici in Rome, the painting is described as "a semi-circular painting on panel depicting the Annunciation by Andrea del Sarto ... that is, the one that was removed from the chapel behind the choir of the Annunziata in Florence."[9] This notice, which refers both to the liturgical origins of the work and its new status as a "painting," neatly sums up the transformation that had taken place moving the altarpiece from the chapel at the Annunziata to Ferdinando's Roman villa. The altar painting had been transformed into a gallery picture.

The *Annunciation* had been originally intended as the lunette to Sarto's *Madonna with Eight Saints* (fig. 69) of 1528 for Benedetto Celsi's chapel in the church of S. Domenico at Sarzana.[10] According to Vasari, the lunette had been retained in payment of a debt by Celsi's

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[7] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 136, f. 151v.

[8] For Sarto's *Annunciation*, see Shearman 1965, no. 89, vol. 1, pp. 275-76; *Andrea del Sarto* 1987, no. XXIV, pp. 151-54.

[9] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 79, fol. 404: "Una pittura di mezo tondo in tavola, dipinto la Nostra Donna Anunziata da l'Angelo, dipinto da Andrea del Sarto ... Si dice esser quello che s'è levato della cappella dietro al coro della Nunziata di Fierenze."

[10] Shearman 1965, no. 88, vol. 1, p. 275.

Florentine intermediary, Giuliano Scala, who had it installed above an altarpiece depicting Saints Cosmas and Damian, now lost, when he acquired the rights in 1534 to the chapel of St Simeon in the tribune of the Annunziata.[11] Even though its devotional function would have been secondary to the main panel of the altarpiece, Sarto's lunette took precedence in the eyes of many viewers. For example, in Francesco Bocchi's lengthy praise of the *Annunciation* in the *Bellezze di Firenze*, the main altarpiece is not even mentioned, despite the fact that Bocchi organized his survey of Florentine painting and sculpture topographically, listing all artworks of note.[12] Such was Sarto's fame in his native city that, by the 1580s, paintings by the "*pittore senza errori*," as Vasari famously described him, had become nearly impossible to obtain.[13]

Indeed the importance of the painting for Florentine viewers is also indicated by Ferdinando's decision to have a copy made by Alessandro Allori, now lost, to take the place of the original in the Scala chapel.[14] Bocchi indicates that the copy was a very close imitation;[15] and it is likely that he is accurate.[16] Most extant copies of other altarpieces

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[11] Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, pp. 847-48. Little is known of the original altarpiece aside from its subject. It was replaced when the chapel was ceded in 1604 to the Brunaccini family, who undertook a complete renovation of the chapel the following year. Domenico Passignano designed the architectural ornaments and altarpiece; Jacopo da Empoli and Pietro Sorri created paintings for the lateral walls; and Ottavio Vannini decorated the vault; Tonini 1876, pp. 179-80.

[12] Bocchi 1591, pp. 225-26.

[13] For example, Eleonora Gonzaga's strenuous efforts to acquire works by Sarto in the late-sixteenth century are well documented in her correspondence with her agents; Piccinelli 2000. For more on the "cult" of Sarto in the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Padovani 1986.

[14] Shearman 1965, vol. 2, p. 276.

[15] Bocchi 1591, pp. 225: "Cappella degli Scali, dove si vede sopra la tavola in mezzo tondo una Nunziata, fatta di mano di Alessandro Allori, imitata con somma industria da un'altra di mano di Andrea del Sarto."

extracted during the seventeenth century are effectively replicas, reproducing the composition and figures with virtually complete fidelity. Substitute copies of altarpieces were not intended to be counterfeits – a frequent hazard in the market for old master gallery paintings – and presumably only connoisseurs would have been able to discern the finer points of execution between the original and its copy.[17] The loss of Sarto's *Annunciation* was thus lamented by Bocchi, who nevertheless praised the high quality of Allori's copy.[18] The replacement of the original by the substitute copy forms a crucial departure from the customary practice whereby old altarpieces were replaced with entirely new paintings, usually

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[16] The copy of Sarto's *Annunciation* was likely removed along with the original altarpiece during Domenico Passignano's renovation of the chapel in 1604. Certainly it had been removed by 1730 as Bottari remarked in his annotated edition of Borghini's *Il Riposo* ("Questo mezzo tondo non vi è più"); Borghini/Bottari 1730, p. 347, note 1. The copy was evidently among the paintings sold by Charles Scitivaux to the Louvre in 1821. Early Louvre catalogue notices form the basis of all subsequent citations of the painting, and indicate that it was of high quality and of the same dimensions as the original, which was by that time part of the collection at the Pitti Palace; see, for example, Villot 1855, no. 440. However, recent and concrete documentation of the copy is lacking; cf. Shearman 1965, vol. 2, p. 276. For copies of altarpieces by Andrea del Sarto, see also Meloni Trkulja 1986.

[17] The exception that proves the rule is the bizarre theft in the 1674 of the high altarpieces by Jacopo Bassano from the provincial churches of S. Giacomo Maggiore at Tomo and S. Martino at Rasai near Feltre. Both altarpieces had been removed from the churches by Giovanni Battista Volpato under the pretence of having them restored; however, with the collusion of Alvise Zen, Volpato kept the altarpieces and replaced them with convincing counterfeits. Although there were suspicions about the "returned" altarpieces – some noted the odour of the fresh varnish – the substitution was not discovered until 1685, when the painter Carlo Ostj was researching notable local paintings, at which time legal proceedings were launched against Volpato and his conspirators. After compensating Zen, Volpato had apparently kept the paintings for his own didactic use – he believed copying was fundamental to artistic practice – and also used them to produce further counterfeits. The paintings were eventually pawned to Gabriel Michieli in 1682, and, in 1683, sold to another buyer. The altarpieces were never restored to the churches, but were sold by auction in 1695 to a certain Gian Battista Salvioni, who would have the altarpieces stolen from his home in 1701. For the complicated history of Bassano's altarpieces and Volpato's trial, see Bordignon Favero 1994, pp. 131-44. I thank Philip Sohm for bringing this fascinating episode to my attention.

[18] Bocchi 1591, pp. 225. Bocchi's admiration for Sarto is expressed in the *Discorso sopra l'eccellenza dell'opere d'Andrea del Sarto* (Florence, Biblioteca Uffizi, MS 9, ins. 1), which was composed in 1567, though never published. For more on Sarto's importance for Bocchi, see Williams 1989.

because their owners wanted something more up-to-date or because the chapel had switched hands. By contrast, when the impetus to remove an altarpiece came from an external party, there was not necessarily a corresponding desire among owners and church officials to change the existing image. The provision of a copy was thus an enticement in negotiating the sale of an altarpiece, though, as I shall discuss below, many owners were disinclined to accept any substitute for their altarpiece. But the significance of these replicas cannot be overstated; for it would suffice the religious needs of churches simply to install a wholly new altarpiece instead. The copy, on the other hand, attested to the status churchmen and devotees attached to the esteemed original.

Notably, this practice had its roots in private collecting. As discussed in the previous chapter, copies of famed Renaissance paintings were already being made in increasing numbers by the late sixteenth century as a means of satisfying the growing demand for a finite pool of desirable paintings. In an inversion of this practice, more demanding collectors offered substitute copies instead to the owners of coveted paintings in order to compensate for them for their lost original. In July 1579, the Florentine aristocrats, Antonio Bracci and Salvi Borgherini, each gave Ferdinando a devotional painting by Sarto – a *Holy Family* and *Madonna and Child*, respectively – which had been passed down through their families. But before the two paintings were sent to Rome, Alessandro Allori made copies of the two paintings to be kept by their respective owners.[19] It is uncertain how the paintings were used by Bracci and Borgherini. If they belonged to a collection, as they likely did, then both the

[19] For the *Borgherini Madonna*, see Shearman 1965, vol. 2, pp. 309-10; *Andrea del Sarto* 1986, no. 27, pp. 161-62 (although Shearman categorizes it as a lost work, Serena Padovani associates it with a painting in the Pitti collections first recorded in the Tribuna inventory of 1589). For the *Bracci Holy Family*, see Shearman 1965, no. 66, vol. 2, pp. 258-59; *Andrea del Sarto* 1986, no. 20, pp. 137-39.

originals and copies fulfilled essentially the same purpose, such that there would have been almost complete continuity between their respective functions. By contrast, the implications of this practice for an altar painting such as the *Annunciation* are especially profound, for the original and its copy were to perform explicitly separate roles. The sacred function and aesthetic values that had co-mingled in the original painting would thus be divided according to viewership: for the liturgical and devotional needs of the church and its worshippers, a replica maintaining the same subject would suffice; for the connoisseurial and acquisitive purposes of collectors, it was the artist, and hence, the original that mattered. It was, in effect, the realization of the bifurcation between image and art that had been at the heart of the controversy of images that ran the course of the sixteenth century.

Accordingly the framing of the *Annunciation* would have remained in the church along with the replica, while the the original painting was incorporated into Cardinal Ferdinando's collections at the Villa Medici in Rome. The villa, which he acquired in 1576, did not have a gallery proper, nevertheless the cardinal amassed one of the most notable collections in Rome, second only to the Farnese.[20] With the grand salon bedecked with portraits, battle scenes, and city scapes, the *Annunciation* was hung in the cardinal's private apartments along with the rest of the paintings by Sarto and other prized works of the early sixteenth century by Pontormo, Titian, and others.[21] Simply divesting the image of its old

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[20] For Ferdinando's activities as a collector in Rome, see Butters 1991; Cecchi 1991; Gasparri 1991; *Villa Medici* 1999; Barocchi and Bertelà 2002, vol. 1, pp. 29-57, 79-87.

[21] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 790 (see also the 1596-1601 inventory of the Villa Medici, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicia 363, ins. 2, fol. 119v). For the arrangement of Cardinal Ferdinando's collection according to the 1588 inventory, see Cecchi 1991, pp. 502-04; Hochmann 1999, pp. 16ff.

frame went a long way in transforming any former altarpiece, not only by changing its appearance, but also by eliminating its unmistakable liturgical footprint. But more important here is what the frame is not, that is, a site-specific, liturgical accoutrement. Unlike the altarpiece frame, which usually took the form of a classical aedicule meant to both aggrandize the image within and integrate it with its surroundings, the gallery frame functioned as an unobtrusive boundary which delineated the limits of the pictorial field, protected the support, and visually enhanced the image.[22] Presumably the *Annunciation* was mounted within a comparatively plain frame of the type that had become *de rigueur* in collections and galleries. Seventeenth-century experts, such as Giulio Mancini and Nicolas Poussin, were unequivocal about the merits of the new fashion for simplicity and restraint, and recommended frames with matte gold or black finishes that would complement but not overwhelm the images within.[23] But Ferdinando also had the painting remodelled – the

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[22] In recent decades, the crucial yet undervalued role of the frame in creating meaning and mediating between viewer and object has been the subject of art historical inquiry. The key texts on frames and framing as signifiers of works of art are Derrida 1978, ch. 2, "Parergon;" Marin 2001.

[23] Mancini 1956-57, vol. 1, pp. 145-46: "Quanto alli cornice non è da dubitare che convengono, prima per essere un difesa alle pitture dai nocumenti esterni, doppo perché danno maestà alle pitture, che le fanno vedere quasi per una fenestra, o vogliam dire per on orizonte così fattamente circonscritto, e le rendono con una certa maestà ornate ... E l'ornamento, se deve esser dorato o non dorato, crederei che in alcune cose piccole, di color molto vivace et che non han troppo rilievo, come è la maniera del Baroccio, fossero molto meglio di color nero che dorate, perché in questo modo non farebbe abbagliar la vista et impedimento nel guardar la pittura. Ma quando la pittura fusse antica, come quelle del secol rinascente e del buono et anco del perfetto, perché con il tempo già s'è spento il vigor del colore, allhora crederei che fusse meglio il dorarle." In a letter of 28 April to his patron, Chantelou, Nicolas Poussin echoes Mancini's advice, Poussin 1991, pp. 20-21: "Quand vous aurés repceu le vostre, je vous suplie, si vous le trouvés bon, de l'orner d'un peu de corniche, car il en a besoin, affin que en le considérans en toutes ses parties les rayons de l'oeil soient retenus et non point espars au dehors en recepuant les espèses des autres obiects voisins qui venant pesle-mesle ... Il seroit fort à propos que laditte corniche fut dorée d'or mat tout simplement, car il s'unit très-doucement avec les couleurs sans les offenser." As Nicholas Penny observes, the recommendations of Mancini and Poussin regarding framing are borne out in descriptions of frames in contemporary inventories; Penny 1998.

empty "spandrels" on either side of the arched profile of the lunette were painted with parted curtains – so that it would conform to the regular, rectangular profile of a gallery painting. Reframed in this manner, the former altarpiece would become indistinguishable from the other genres of paintings in the collection.

There is no evidence that the removal of Sarto's lunette from the Annunziata met with any opposition. Yet this episode was virtually unique in the sixteenth century, and suggests that the secularization of entire altarpieces still must have been considered to be transgressive. This is supported by several documented instances of late-sixteenth-century collectors who tried to acquire famous altarpieces. In 1571, Guidobaldo II, the Duke of Urbino unsuccessfully sought to acquire Raphael's *Marriage of the Virgin* from the Albizzini chapel in S. Francesco at Città di Castello (fig. 70), which was still in the possession of the founding family, despite aggressive efforts on his behalf by his secretary, Monsignor Paolo Maria della Rovere, Bishop of Cagli.[24] The duke evidently had to be satisfied with a copy instead, which appears in an inventory of 1631.[25] In 1584, Alfonso II d'Este, had an agent compile a list of prospective paintings in Modena for his collection ("*Pitture di consideratione che sono in Modena*"), which comprised mostly local altarpieces by Correggio, Dosso Dossi, and Francesco Francia (although he evidently had little success in

[24] In a letter of 29 September 1571, the General of the Franciscans in Rimini solicits the help of Monsignore Paolo Maria della Rovere, the Bishop of Cagli in Città di Castello in acquiring the altarpiece. The bishop responded on 4 October 1571 that the altar was still in the possession of the Albizzini family. The Albizzini re-endowed their chapel in 1633, and the altarpiece remained *in situ* until it was acquired by Count Giuseppe Lechi in 1798. The letters are transcribed in Shearman 2003, 1571/1-1571/2.

[25] Shearman 2003, vol. 2, p. 1223.

acquiring any of them).[26] Notably, in 1587, the duke tried to purchase Correggio's celebrated *Adoration of the Shepherds* from the Pratonero chapel in S. Prospero at Reggio (fig. 71), known among connoisseurs as "*La notte*" due to its unusual, nocturnal setting, which was rendered by the artist with dramatic virtuosity.[27] It seems that Alfonso had hoped that with the death of the last of the founding patrons of the chapel there would be room to negotiate. However, Fulvio Rangone, the governor of Reggio, informed Alfonso that neither of the "two minors" currently in possession of the chapel nor the priests of the church were willing to relinquish Correggio's painting, for they valued it "as much as a jewel."[28] Similarly, when, in 1591, Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato, the nephew of the newly elected Gregory XIV, removed Raphael's portrait of Julius II (fig. 72) and *Madonna of Loreto* (fig. 73) from S. Maria del Popolo in exchange for a middling donation of one hundred *scudi* to the church – images that were not altarpieces but ex-votos – a contemporary account reported that he had "displeased all of Rome."[29]

There was nothing lawfully wrong with selling altarpieces: old altarpieces were routinely replaced by new ones as chapels and churches were renovated and relocated or when families could no longer afford to maintain their altars, although crucially those

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[26] Venturi 1882, p. 171, ch. 2, doc. I.

[27] Cf. Gould 1976, p. 205.

[28] Lightbown 1963b, p. 198.

[29] The notice comes from Alessandro Tassoni's annotation to Vasari's description of the two paintings in the 1568 edition of the *Vite*. Tassoni was in Rome sometime after 1595, shortly after the removal of the paintings. He notes: "L'uno e l'altro delli detti quadri l'anno 1591 al tempo di Gregorio XIV il Cardinale Sfondrato suo nipote, non senza dispiacere universale di tutta Roma, li ha presi con fare a quel monastero elemosina di 100 scudi." Shearman 2003, vol. 2, p. 1146, note 6. For the problematic history of the paintings in S. Maria del Popolo, see Kempers 2004; Meyer zur Capellen 2001, no. 51, pp. 89-97; Meyer zur Capellen 2008, no. 71, pp. 100-08.

altarpieces that were sold (as opposed to the untold numbers that were simply discarded[30]) typically retained their function as altarpieces.[31] The impropriety of removing a sacrosanct object from a religious institution, on the other hand, was so deeply entrenched as to require no elaboration. Paul Wescher points out that with the renewed potency of the Church in the fifteenth century, sacred art was seen as inviolable and spoliation was severely censured.[32] There was nothing comparable to the Sack of Constantinople of 1204 for more than four centuries after: even Louis XII and Francis I had left the Classical and Italian art that they so admired intact. Within the realm of humanism, elites and literati would have been familiar with the *Verrine Orations*, Cicero's monolithic prosecution of the notorious governor of Sicily, Gaius Verres, on grounds of extortion. Cicero makes frequent mention of his spoliation of temples and sanctuaries – which he denuded of their statues to horde in his own private collections – as a sacrilege so grave as to put the corruption, greed, and depravity of his governance beyond any doubt.[33] There were further deterrents. Buying a church altarpiece necessarily faced public scrutiny, and hence, could be subject to acts of resistance. Furthermore, the fame and prestige of those altarpieces that aroused the interest of

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[30] On the loss of early Venetian altarpieces, for example, see Humfrey 1993a, p. 21.

[31] Although we know much about *ius patronatus* as it relates to commissioning and installing altarpieces, more research into the legal conditions for deaccessioning altarpieces is needed. For example, Ronald Lightbown states simply that "special permission had…to be obtained from the Pope" and that "paintings placed in private chapels could not be removed without ecclesiastical sanction;" Lightbown 1963a, p. 98. Some examples of the sort of paperwork entailed in the legal and illegal removal of altarpieces are provided in the appendices below.

[32] Wescher 1988, pp.11ff.

[33] The *Verrine Orations* was among the manuscripts discovered by Poggio Bracciolini at St Gall in 1416, which effectively ignited interest in Cicero's rhetorical style. For the circulation of the *Verrine Orations* during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Miles 2002, pp. 38-39.

prospective buyers was not lost on their owners or their communities. Church officials were not inclined to part with their prized holdings, nor were civic authorities, who had a vested interest in preserving their local patrimony. Indeed, it would be two more decades before another collector would follow in Ferdinando's footsteps.

II. 1608: Cardinal Scipione Borghese's "Theft" of Raphael's *Entombment* Altarpiece

In the early morning hours of 19 March 1608, Raphael's celebrated *Entombment* (fig. 74) was removed from the church of S. Francesco in Perugia and lowered over the city gates into the hands of the agents of Cardinal Scipione Borghese.[34] Raphael's altarpiece, which took the form of an ambitious *istoria*, was an exemplary work by any standard. Its considerable artistic merits, which had elicited universal admiration since its installation in the Baglioni chapel a century prior, had not escaped the attention of Cardinal Scipione.[35] As the nephew of Paul V, Scipione encountered few obstacles when it came to getting what he wanted. Indeed, he was arguably the most rapacious collector of the day, having notoriously arrested the favourite painter of Clement VIII, the Cavalier d'Arpino in 1607 and seized his enviable collection, which included several highly desirable early works by Caravaggio.[36]

Negotiations with the Franciscans began in mid-1607, and Borghese quickly secured

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[34] The events surrounding the removal of the altarpiece are recounted in Lightbown 1963a. For the related documentation, see Della Pergola 1959, no. 170, vol. 2, pp. 196-215; Hermann-Fiore 2010, pp. 223-63.

[35] The *Entombment* altarpiece is signed and dated 1507, and was commissioned the previous year by Atalanta Baglioni for her chapel in the church of S. Francesco al Prato. The circumstances of the commission are usually associated with the tragic death of her son, Grifonetto, in 1500. For the background of the Baglioni family and its relation to the altarpiece, see Nagel 2000, pp. 116-22.

[36] For Scipione Borghese's activities as a collector, see Calvesi 1994.

the support of both the prior of S. Francesco and the papal governor of Perugia. But once Braccio Baglioni – a distant descendent of the main line of the family, which had died out in the 1570s – got wind of the cardinal's plans, he rushed to the city to claim ownership of the *Entombment*.[37] Although Baglioni's intervention came to naught, he was evidently successful in stirring up local opposition against the cardinal. To assuage the prior's apprehension, approval was also sought from the Vicar General.[38] On 17 March 1608, the picture was formally donated to Borghese.[39] The following night, the Prior cunningly moved the painting to a "secret" sacristy of the convent under a plausible pretext where it could be easily removed by the Cardinal's agents.[40] Once word got out that the altarpiece was missing, the populace threatened to riot. City officials demanded the return of the painting in a volley of missives addressed to the cardinal and other authorities.[41] For the Perugians, the altarpiece was nothing less than a civic monument, cherished as much for its beauty as its devotional role.[42] In order to put an end to the ongoing dispute, on 11 April, Paul V issued a papal brief and *motu* proprio ratifying his nephew's legal ownership of the painting,

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[37] Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, docs.7-10.

[38] Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, doc. 11

[39] Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, doc. 14

[40] Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, doc. 15.

[41] The correspondence disputing the removal of the altarpiece, which begins on 31 March and ends on 26 April 1608 is compiled in Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, docs. 17-42.

[42] The Priori of Perugia to Cardinal Scipione Borghese, 6 April 1608: "Non può questo popolo così facilmente quietarsi mentre crede che questi frati della Chiesa di San Francesco i quali sono tanti obligati a questa Città, habbiano con modo così strano, et insolito, levatoli un tesoro di tanta importanza come è la tavola della esposizione della Croce che è stata in quella Chiesa per più di cent'anni, tanto stimata da tutti, non solo per l'eccellenza dell'opera, ma per la divotione particolare, che ogniuno vi haveva;" Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, doc. 21.

explaining that the picture was needed for "purposes of devotion."[43] In an effort to mollify the Perugians, Borghese offered the church five silver lanterns and agreed to replace the altarpiece with a copy.[44] Although the Perugians may have been inordinately proprietary about Raphael's *Entombment*, the need for a papal brief affirming the legitimacy of Scipione's ownership of the altarpiece indicates just how contentious his acquisition of the *Entombment* was, and also that it was necessary to conceal the cardinal's real intentions for the altarpiece. Once the painting was in Rome, it promptly entered Borghese's gallery in his palazzo at Borgo Nuovo, where, according to the Perugian envoy Cornelio degli Oddi, it was "seen by many cardinals as well as the pope himself."[45] Whereas Sarto's *Annunciation* was already a fragment when it was acquired by Ferdinando de' Medici, in removing the *Entombment* from its framework, Borghese divested its "extraneous" images – a crowning panel of God the Father, a painted frieze, and a three-panelled grisaille predella of the Theological Virtues below – and reframed the central panel as an independent picture. With the main panel now separated from its enframement, it effectively became a large-scale easel painting. A near-contemporary annotation in a copy of Vasari associated with the Carracci circle records that the *Entombment* was on view in the Borghese palace "among his most

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[43] Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, doc. 29; cf. Lightbown 1963a, pp. 100-01.

[44] A copy by Lanfranco, since lost, was installed several months later. It was replaced soon thereafter by another copy by the Cavalier d'Arpino, which is now in the Galleria Nazionale di Umbria. For the history of the copies, see *Raffaello nelle raccolte Borghese* 1984, pp. 49-51; *Raphael from Urbino to Rome* 2004, no. 65, pp. 206-08.

[45] Cornelio degli Oddi to Gattamelata Vibio Capo, 9 April 1608: "Giovedì passato arrive qua la figura che stave in S. Francesco et è stata portata nelle stanze del S.r Cardinale Borghese, quale di già l'ha fatta vedere a molti Cardinali, et per quanto intend al Papa istesso."

prized paintings;"[46] and it was also mentioned in the 1613 manuscript of Scipione Francucci's panegyric poem, *Galleria dell'Illustrissimo e Reverendissimo Signor Scipione Borghese cantata in versi* (Arezzo, 1647).[47] However, what is perhaps most telling about the episode – which, if not the first instance of an altarpiece being removed to a private collection, was certainly the most infamous – is that the *Entombment* itself arguably presents the most emphatic and overt transposition of the ideal of the narrative *istoria* – a genre intrinsically connected with the development of gallery paintings – into the format of the altarpiece.[48] In other words, Borghese may have been motivated to acquire it precisely because it did not look like an altarpiece.

Although Albertian precepts had indirectly informed the development of altarpieces over the course of the fifteenth century, the *Entombment* was the outcome of Raphael's direct and purposeful engagement with Alberti's text. The main panel of the altarpiece depicts the transport of Christ's body away from the swooning Virgin and toward an unseen tomb, a subject of inherent narrative action that was an unusual departure from the more typical depictions of the "Lamentation" or "Christ before the Tomb." Two muscular figures carrying Christ strain in exertion, while the Magdalene rushes in to kiss His hand. The main grouping of Christ and the bearers, in particular, responds to the specific artistic challenge of

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[46] Shearman 2003, vol. 2, p. 1140, note 5: "Quest tavola è quella che ho vista nel palazzo del Cardinale Borghese fra suoi quadri più pregiati." There is otherwise no documentary evidence of the Raphael's *Entombment* in the Borghese collections until 1650 when it is described by Jacopo Manilli among the holdings at the gallery at the Villa Borghese. An earlier inventory of the gallery, compiled sometime before 1633, does not record the painting, which presumably was still hung at the Palazzo Borghese; Barberini 1984, pp. 16-17.

[47] Barberini 1984, p. 16.

[48] For the *Entombment* in relation to the Albertian *istoria*, see, Rosenberg 1986; Nagel 2000, ch. 4, "The Altarpiece in the Age of History Painting."

portraying a "lifeless" body as epitomized in Alberti's description of the *Carrying of the Dead Meleager*:

> They praise a 'historia' in Rome, in which the dead Meleager is being carried away, because those who are bearing the burden appear to be distressed and to strain with every limb, while in the dead man there is no member that does not seem completely lifeless; they all hang loose; hands, fingers, neck, all droop inertly down, all combine together to represent death. This is the most difficult thing of all to do, for to represent the limbs of a body entirely at rest is as much the sign of an excellent artist as to render them all alive and in action.[49]

Counting the mourners standing behind the bearers and the women attending the Virgin, there are ten figures in all, the ideal number, as prescribed by Alberti, for achieving the "dignified" (but not excessive) abundance required of an *istoria*.[50] Scrutiny of the individual figures reveals that Raphael also paid careful attention to Alberti's guidelines for the variety of physical types and postures as well as the depiction of differing emotional states.[51] In short, almost every detail of the *Entombment* evinces Raphael's efforts to apply the most salient qualities of the *istoria* – the harmonious balance between simplicity and copiousness, the diverse attitudes, gestures, and ages of the figures, the characterization of emotion, and crucially, the depiction of dramatic movement – to an altarpiece, an undertaking that was surely complicated by the authoritative conventions of the format.

Over half a century earlier Mantegna had already transposed Alberti's paradigmatic account of the Carrying of the Dead Meleager (fig. 75) into a large engraving of the Christian *Entombment* – among the earliest efforts to comprehensively implement the Albertian *istoria*

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[49] Alberti/Grayson 2004, p. 73.

[50] Alberti/Grayson 2004, pp. 75-76.

[51] Alberti/Grayson 2004, pp. 75-80.

– an image that strongly informed Raphael's conception of the subject.[52] But whereas Mantegna faced no real restrictions in the more experimental medium of engraving, the same could not be said for altarpieces, which had to address both the liturgical duties of the clergy as well as the devotional needs of the patrons.[53] Indeed, the experimental nature of Raphael's project is manifest in the remarkable series of preparatory drawings, which reveal two different conceptions for the altarpiece.[54] A highly finished *modello* in the Louvre, the earliest of the known drawings related to the altarpiece, depicts a traditional Lamentation (fig. 76), and appears to have been partially adapted from Perugino's *Lamentation* formerly in the church of in S. Chiara in Florence (fig. 77).[55] But at this late stage in the preparation for the altarpiece, Raphael radically revised his composition, moving away from the contemplative staging of the Lamentation toward the more "active" events entailed in the subject of the Entombment.[56] Raphael's portrayal of the conveyance of Christ was an otherwise unusual subject in any genre of religious painting, let alone altarpieces.[57] It is

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[52] Baxandall 1971, pp. 133-34.

[53] On the use of prints as a medium for pictorial innovation, see Ames-Lewis 2000, pp. 249-59.

[54] The chronology and development of the drawings have already been thoroughly analysed by a number of other scholars, including Richter 1945; Rosenberg 1986; Nagel 2000, pp.120ff; *Raphael from Urbino to Rome* 2004, nos. 68-73, pp. 212-21; Meyer zur Capellen 2005, pp. 235-36; Herrmann-Fiore 2010, pp. 108-46.

[55] *Lamentation*, Paris, Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins, no.3865, pen over chalk, 33.5 x 39.7 cm. This was followed by *Lamentation*, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. 529, pen over stylus, 17.9 x 20.6 cm, a loosely finished drawing that revises the distribution of the standing figures.

[56] *Entombment*, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. 531, pen, 21.8 x 30.7 cm; *Entombment*, London, British Museum, inv. 1963-12-16-1 recto, pen, 21.5 x 32 cm; *Entombment*, London, British Museum, inv. 1855-2-14-1 recto, pen over chalk, 23 x 31.9 cm; *Bearers with the Body of Christ* (after an antique relief of the *Death of Meleager*), Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. 539, pen, contours pricked for transfer, 23.2 x 18.5 cm.

significant that Raphael chose not to depict the tomb itself, but implied its existence somewhere to the left of the frame, thereby emphasizing the movement of the figures across the picture field towards their destination. At the same time, the final composition still conforms to an"X" configuration typical of central Italian altarpieces, suggesting that Raphael may have thought it prudent not to veer too far from expectations.

Nevertheless, the magnitude of Raphael's departure from pictorial traditions can be gauged by the paucity of contemporary imitations of the *Entombment*, which indicates that there was some resistance to this reconfiguration of the altarpiece as pure *istoria*.[58] Certainly the painting posed a formidable challenge to prevailing notions of what an altarpiece should look like. But its cool reception may have had more to do with deeply rooted but unarticulated beliefs about the nature of sacred images. As Nagel explains, the nature of narrative subjects, that is, as representations of historical events rather than atemporal sacred images, was inherently at odds with liturgical purposes, which favoured symbolically charged and visually stable images that better conveyed the figural significance of biblical personages and events and better sustained devotional attention.[59] The insistent transitoriness of Raphael's *Entombment*, however, had the effect of rendering Christ's sacrifice as a temporal event rather than a Christian mystery, in effect, undermining the Eucharistic function that the altarpiece was designed to perform.

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[57] Cf. Nagel 2000, pp. 124-30.

[58] Cf. Nagel 2000, pp. 135ff.

[59] Nagel 2000, pp. 71-82. Similar claims are made by Charles Burroughs regarding Botticelli's late religious paintings, which he argues are characterized by a deliberate mannerism and rejection of Albertian perspective that opposed conventions of narrative art in response to the perceived need to formulate a "dedicated" pictorial mode appropriate for sacred art; Burroughs 1997; cf. Joannides 1995.

The extent to which Raphael intended the *Entombment* as an artistic *dimostrazioni* cannot be certain. The painting was clearly ambitious, and it may have been a sincere experiment in applying the ideal of the pure Albertian *istoria* as a means of achieving the most pictorially accomplished and, hence, effective representation of the subject.[60] Regardless of its questionable success in establishing a new iconographic model, the altarpiece did not lack for admirers later on in the century. It was lauded in sixteenth-century guidebooks on Perugia,[61] and received high praise from Vasari, who devoted a lengthy passage to it in the *Vite*, focusing on its emotive content before concluding that its artistic achievement "amazes all who behold it, what with the air of the figures, the beauty of the draperies, and in, short, the supreme excellence that it reveals in every part."[62] Certainly the altarpiece was sufficiently well known by the beginning of the seventeenth century to draw the attention of Cardinal Scipione. A letter from the *sepultuari* (those who owned tombs in S. Francesco) to the city council describes the *Entombment* as a "noble and rare painting celebrated by various authors, and an incomparable joy, for which so many cardinals and

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[60] The iconography of the altarpiece is generally believed to be related to events surrounding the murder of Atalanta's son, Grifonetto, in 1500, in retaliation for his part in the slaying of four patriarchs of the Baglioni clan. According to the chronicle of Francesco Matarazzo, Atalanta, who had shunned Grifonetto for his role in the plot, returned to her mortally wounded son who died in her arms. As Nagel stresses this narrative is replete with resonances of Christ's Passion. The Meleager model may have been consciously adopted due to the fact that "Atalanta" is also the name of the mother of Meleager, whose story bears striking parallels to the events surrounding the death of Grifonetto. Nagel 2000, pp. 117-27.

[61] Shearman 2003, doc. 1591/9, doc. 1597/4.

[62] Vasari/Barocchi 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 164: "Chi considera la diligenza, l'amore, l'arte e la grazia di questa'opera, ha gran ragione di maravigliarsi, perché elle fa stupire chiunque la mira per l'aria delle figure, per la bellezza de' panni, et insomma per una estrema bontà ch'ell'ha in tutte le parti;" translated in Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 716.

princes have yearned."[63]

Likewise, the extent to which Borghese was cognizant of those qualities that made Raphael's *Entombment* an exemplary work also remains a matter of speculation. But the fact that this one altarpiece was singled out among countless others as a collector's item signals to us that Borghese responded to its potential as a gallery painting. Borghese's installation of the picture in a gallery setting was, in a sense, a ratification of Raphael's radical reconception of the altarpiece as history painting. But it was also the inevitable outcome of the willingness of sixteenth-century viewers to regard church altarpieces as works of art.

III. 1602-1608: Rejected Altarpieces

The scandal caused by Borghese's acquisition of the *Entombment* demonstrates that public resistance and opprobrium posed a formidable deterrent to would-be spoliators at the outset of the seventeenth century, and helps also to explain why "rejected" altarpieces were eagerly snapped up by collectors. Only two years earlier before he seized Raphael's *Entombment* from S. Francesco al Prato in Perugia, Borghese had easily acquired Caravaggio's so-called *Madonna of the Serpent* (fig. 78),[64] which had been commissioned by the Confraternity of the Palafrenieri in December 1605 for their altar dedicated to St Anne in the recently finished interior of St Peter's after it was discovered that the existing altarpiece from the old basilica

[63] "Una nobilissima et rarissima pittura celebrata da varii autori, et di una gioia incomparabile, la quale erano andati più volte varii Cardinali et principi a vagheggiare;" quoted in Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, doc. 19.

[64] On Borghese's acquisition of the painting and related documents, see Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, pp. 81-83; Spezzaferro 1974.

did not fit in the new surround.[65] The altarpiece was removed only days after it was installed in April 1606, having been rejected, as it is often assumed, on account of its unforgiving portrayal of St Anne, the emphatic nudity of Christ, who is depicted as a large child, and its unusual iconography.[66] The precise circumstances of its removal, in fact, remain unclear; however, what is certain is that the painting was quickly snapped up by Borghese, with the Confraternity earning a tidy profit of twenty-five *scudi* for their troubles.[67] Indeed, given Borghese's documented propensity to wield his considerable influence to acquire altarpieces, it is not unreasonable to imagine that the removal of the altarpiece may have been simply a matter of Borghese requesting it.[68] The altarpiece made its way into the cardinal's famed collection at the Palazzo Borghese, where it was first mentioned in 1613 in Francucci's *Galleria Borghese*.[69] In 1620, Borghese acquired yet another altarpiece by one of

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[65] The old altarpiece, painted by Jacopino del Conte and Leonardo da Pistoia, which depicts the Virgin and St Anne flanked by Sts Peter and Paul, was moved sometime in the 1620s when the altar dedicated to St Anne was relocated to the sacristy; Rice, p. 45, note 150.

[66] This explanation arises from Bellori's account of the painting from his *Vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni* (Rome 1672), which, however, more simply describes the *Madonna of the Serpent* as "painted in a vile manner" ("ritratti in esso vilemente").

[67] Louise Rice proposes that the removal of the altarpiece was caused by the Confraternity's sudden loss of its rights to their new altar in St Peter's for which Caravaggio's altarpiece was commissioned. This is indicated by a new application for rights to an altar that was submitted by the Confraternity shortly after the removal of Caravaggio's altarpiece, which suggests that they no longer claimed rights to any altar in St Peter's; Rice 1997, pp.43-45.

[68] Notably, the Confraternity members decided not to use the *Madonna of the Serpent* for their own church near St Peter's which, once completed, would assume the duties previously performed by their former altar in old St Peter's. On one hand, the fact that they did not keep the altarpiece for another use indicates that they no longer wanted it; on the other hand, the fact that they made their final payment to Caravaggio in May 1606, that is, after the altarpiece had already been removed from the church, suggests that the Confraternitiy memters were not dissatisfied with it. A scenario with Borghese offering them a financial incentive for selling the altarpiece would reconcile these two considerations.

[69] Della Pergola 1959, vol. 2, pp. 81-83. The altarpiece was next recorded in an inventory of the Villa

Caravaggio's followers, Cecco di Caravaggio. The *Resurrection* (fig. 79) had been commissioned in 1619 by the Medicean ambassador, Piero Guicciardini for his chapel in S. Felicità at Florence, but had been deemed to be unsatisfactory upon its installation.[70] Given Cecco's unusual composition, which features Christ rising above a decidedly terrestrial angel who is holding the tombstone aloft as he gaves out toward the viewer, along with a theatrical assemblage of soldiers of the type commonly seen in the tavern scenes frequently depicted by the Caravaggisti, it is certainly plausible that the altarpiece was not in keeping with Florentine tastes. It is tantalizing to imagine how these altarpieces were displayed in Borghese's gallery; however, Francucci's poem does not provide any clues to the arrangement of the paintings.

It is not without some irony that the realism and starkness of Caravaggio's style, which were instrumental in creating the ambience of profound and intimate spirituality that defined his mature religious paintings, also made them appealing to connoisseurs and collectors, who were eager to get their hands on works by the most novel (and controversial) artist of the day. In 1602, Vincenzo Giustiniani stepped in to salvage a potentially disastrous situation when the *Inspiration of St Matthew* (fig. 80) for the altar of the Contarelli Chapel was rejected by the priests of San Luigi dei Francesi, presumably due to the saint's rustic appearance and casually cross-legged pose (which also had the effect that the bottom of his dramatically foreshortened bare foot appearing to hover indecorously over the altar).[71]

Borghese compiled sometime before 1633; see Corradini 1998, no. 50, p. 450.

[70] Papi 2001, no. 16, pp. 132-35.

[71] For the documents for the commission and removal of the altarpiece, see Pupillo 1996.

Giustiniani not only bought the *St Matthew*, but also funded its replacement thereby ensuring that Caravaggio maintained the prestigious commission. As Caravaggio's arch-rival, Giovanni Baglione snidely remarked, the painting "pleased nobody" but Giustiniani took it "because it was by Michelangelo."[72] The painting was hung in the Grand Gallery at the Palazzo Giustiniani along with the rest of his paintings by Caravaggio among works by famed sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists.[73]

In 1606, another one of Caravaggio's altarpieces, the *Death of the Virgin* (fig. 81), which had been painted Laerzio Cherubini's chapel in S. Maria della Scala, was similarly rejected by the friars of the church, although in this case, its perceived lack of decorum was almost certainly the problem.[74] A near-contemporary account comes from Giulio Mancini, who, as discussed above, had a vested interest in the value of Caravaggio's works and thus can be considered a fairly reliable source on the circumstances of its rejection. In the *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, Mancini twice mentions that the altarpiece had been rejected because of the indecorousness of the portrayal of the Virgin, who he likened to a "prostitute." Although the matter of Caravaggio's model remains uncertain, the figure, who all too realistically resembled a bloated corpse, was demonstrably unidealized both in form and

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[72] Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori, et architetti* (Rome, 1642), p. 137: "Per il Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani fece ... il quadro d'un certo s. Matteo, che prima havea fatto per quell'altare di s. Luigi, e non era a veruno piacciuto, egli per esser'opera di Michelagnolo, se'l prese;" quoted in Friedlaender 1955, p. 353.

[73] The painting is recorded in the 1638 post-mortem inventory of Giustiniani's collection; see Salerno 1960, p. 135.

[74] Mancini 1956-57, pp. 120, 132: "La Morte della madonna nella Scala, che l'ha adesso il Serenissimo di Mantova, fatta levar di detta chiesa da quei padri perché in persona della Madonna havea ritratto una cortegiana ... per descriver una Vergine e Nostra Donna, vanno retrahendo qualche meretrice sozza delli ortacci, come faceva Michelangelo da Caravaggio e fece nel Transito di Nostra Donna, in quel quadro della Madonna della Scala, che per tal rispetto qui buoni padri non lo volsero."

disposition.

Thus, it comes as some surprise to find that just over a decade before he wrote the *Considerazioni*, Mancini sought to acquire the painting for the family's chapel in Siena.[75] In a letter of October 1606 proposing the purchase to his brother, Cardinal Deifebo, he described it as being "without decorum or invention or cleanliness," but added that it was "well made" and "even better than the *Saint John*."[76] Yet his appreciation of the painting as a superior and (suddenly) rare example of Caravaggio's art – the artist had fled the city only months earlier on charges of the murder of Ranuccio Tomassoni – evidently trumped any cavilling over its style or content. Caravaggio's departure from Rome must have been acutely felt by collectors and artists alike who realized that paintings by his hand had suddenly become a much rarer commodity, and collectors responded in kind. Cardinal Deifebo, however, denied his brother; one assumes due to its hefty 270-*scudi* asking price and considerable notoriety. In the end, Mancini was nudged out of the negotiations for the painting once Duke Vincenzo I Gonzaga, a patron of much higher rank and greater means, expressed his interest in it.[77] Gonzaga was acting on the advice of Peter Paul Rubens, who

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[75] For Mancini's correspondence with his brother regarding the *Death of the Virgin*, see Maccherini 1990-93, ch. 5, "La Morte della Vergine: un'occasione perduta (1606-1607); Maccherini 1997, pp. 76-78.

[76] Giulio Mancini to Deifebo Mancini, 14 October 1606: "Già che dite piacer questo Caravaggio, qua è una la tavola da altare dove è la morte della Madonna attorno con li Apostoli quale andava nella Madonna della Schala di Trastevere, che per esser stata spropositata di lascivia e di decoro il Frate Scalzo l'ha fatta levare. È alta 23 palmi larga 11 in circa è ben fatta ma senza decoro e inventione e pulitezza, ma le cose son ben fatte di meglio maniera che costesto Sancto Giovanni. Io li ho offerto 200 scudi, costò 270, se vi paresse che fussi per noi io farei diligenze di haverla et attrono ne potessemo far qualche cosa di Sancto Bartolomeo, però ditemene quanto prima;" quoted in Maccherini 1990-93, pp. 166-67. See also Maccherini 1997, pp. 76-78, docs. 2, 5, 6.

[77] Giulio Mancini to Deibebo Mancini, 12 January 1607: "Vi scrissi del quadro che l'havevo per compro con mio comodo, però per li 270, so che quancheduno saputo ci riprenderà, ma per esser

had admired Caravaggio's works during his sojourn in Rome.[78] The correspondence of the Mantuan envoy, Giovanni Magno, is explicit about Gonzaga's interest in it as a collector. In a letter of February 1607, Magno reports of the acclaim it had received from Rubens and other experts in Rome and advises that it "is one of the most famous for collectors of modern things, and the picture is held to be one of the best of the works he has done."[79] The following week, Magno reports that Rubens had negotiated a price of 280 *scudi* for the altarpiece (although in correspondence with Eleanora Gonzaga the following February, he reveals that the final amount approached 350 *scudi*).[80] But before the painting could be dispatched to Mantua, it was put on display for a week in the house of the Mantuan ambassador at the behest of the painters' guild so that curious painters could finally view the sequestered painting.[81]

Significantly, with all of Caravaggio's rejected altarpieces – which were reconstituted

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servitio di Iddio e abbellimento della Città mi curarò pocho delle lagne. E perché questa settimana è stata tutta piovosa e io esco fuor pocho, non ho concluso, lunedì sarò da padri, fermarò, farò le scritture e mirarò arrotolarlo e mandarlo con il nome di Iddio né lo lascierete vedere mai privatamente, né fia che l'havere costà non ne dite cos'alcuna; nell'altra;" quoted in Maccerhini 1990-93, pp.169-70.

[78] Rubens's own free adaptation of Caravaggio's *Entombment* in the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa was likely undertaken as a personal study given its small dimensions and loose brushwork.

[79] Giovanni Magno to Annibale Chieppo, 17 February 1607: "Si vide domenica passata il quadro del Caravaggio proposto dal signor Pietro Pavolo Rubens, quale, riveduto da esso Rubens, ne prese anco maggior sodisfatione, come fu tenuto per opera buona anco dal Fachetti, che a parte mi ha detto il suo parere. Io ne presi quel gusto che conveniva al giuditio concorde d'huomini della professione … Il pittore però è de' più famosi de' quelli che habbino cose moderne in Roma et questa tavola è tenuta delle meglio opera che habbi fatto, onde la presunttione sta a favore del quadro per molti rispetti et realmente vi si osservano certe parti molto esquisite;" Furlotti 2003, doc. 714.

[80] Furlotti 2003, docs. 717, 765.

[81] Giovanni Magni to Annibale Chieppio, 7 April 1607: "Mi è stato necessario, per sodisfar all'università delli pittori, lasciar veder per tutta questa settimana il quadro comparato, essendovi concorsi molti et delli più famosi con molta curiosità;" Furlotti 2003, doc. 721.

as gallery paintings with fluidity and ease – there were scarcely any misgivings about the appropriateness of liturgically motivated content for a secular environment. Although the gallery would seem to be the ideal venue for troublesome altarpieces, Rubens did not enjoy the same outcome when his own altarpiece for the high altar of the Chiesa Nuova (fig. 82) was rejected by the Oratorians in 1608 for reasons that remain uncertain.[82] He offered to redo the work according to a new plan at his own expense, presumably to retain the prestigious and prominent commission, which he had boasted was the "most beautiful and superb opportunity … in the most celebrated and visited church in Rome."[83] In a subsequent letter to Gonzaga's agent, Annibale Chieppo, Rubens tactfully noted his own dissatisfaction with the painting, which he blamed on unforeseen problems with the reflectiveness of the canvas support caused by the "perverse light" from the windows in the *cappella maggiore*.[84] However, it seems just as likely that his composition – a *sacra conversazione* with the figure of St Gregory the Great, who wears a billowing white cope rendered with virtuosic monumentality, dominating the composition – did not sufficiently emphasize the miraculous image of the Madonna della Vallicella that it was meant to house, and which is signified by a fictive icon set into the attic of a triumphal arch. Indeed, the new scheme was drastically altered (fig. 83): Rubens consigned the saints to two lateral canvases and filled the main

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[82] For the history and analysis of Rubens's Chiesa Nuova Altarpiece, see Incisa della Rocchetta 1963; Jaffé 1977, pp. 85-99; Costamagna 1995.

[83] Peter Paul Rubens to Annibale Chieppio, 2 December 1606: "Offerendosi dunque la più bella et superba occasione di tutta Roma, mi spinse ancora zelo d'honore a prevalermi della mia sorte. Quest'è l'altar maggiore de la chiesa Nuova delli preti dell'Oratorio, detta Santa Maria in Vallicella, senza dubbio hoggidì la più celebrate et frequentata chiesa di Rome;" Furlotti 2003, doc. 707.

[84] Furlotti 2003, doc. 763.

panel instead with a company of cherubs and angels, thereby ensuring that the Madonna della Vallicella – now mounted within a real frame and covered by an inset icon that would be raised to reveal the cult image on feast days – would be the unequivocal focal point of the altarpiece.[85]

Surely prompted by his recent involvement in the acquisition of Caravaggio's rejected altarpiece on behalf of Vincenzo Gonzaga, Rubens appealed to the duke to purchase the altarpiece as a gallery painting. He writes:

> I recall that my Lord the Duke and Madame the Duchess told me on other occasions that they would like to have one of my paintings for their picture gallery. And I confess that if Their Highnesses wish to do me the honour, I would be very glad if they would take the abovementioned painting, which without a doubt is by the far the best and most successful that I have ever done.[86]

In describing the painting, Rubens mentions only such pictorial qualities (the exquisiteness of the colour, the delicacy of the faces and drapery, its naturalism) as would appeal to a connoisseur like Gonzaga, and adds that the saints lacked any insignia or attributes that would firmly identify them, thus making the image "customizable" according to the duke's

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[85] Scholars concur that Rubens's excuse regarding lighting is disingenuous; however, there is little consensus on how the original altarpiece would have incorporated the Madonna della Vallicella, an important consideration given the radical reconfiguration of the second version. Although Rubens's letter of 9 June 1607 indicates that the cult image and painting "go together, and one cannot be unveiled without the other" (Furlotti 2003, doc. 732), there is no physical indication that the painting on canvas was meant to accommodate an inset image in the manner of a *Bildtabernakel*. Given the nature of the changes undertaken in the second version of the altarpiece, it is reasonable to assume that at least one of the problems was the lack of prominence accorded to the miraculous image of the Madonna della Vallicella. Another likely reason is that the Oratorians altered their plans on how the cult image following the death on 30 June 1607 of Cardinal Cesare Baronio, who is credited with devising the original programme for the altarpiece.

[86] Peter Paul Rubens to Annibale Chieppo, 2 February 1608: "Ricordandomi che'l signor duca e madama serenissima altre volte mi dissero di volere un quadro mio per la galleria delle pitture, confesso che, poiché l'altezze loro mi vogliono far questo honore, mi sarebbe carissimo che si servissero della sudetta tavola, che senza dubbio di gran longa è riuscita la meglior opera ch'io facessi mai;" Furlotti 2003, doc. 763.

iconographic preferences.[87] To this end, Rubens painted over the martyrs' palm fronds of Sts Maurus and Domatilla. But before sending the painting to Mantua, Rubens would first exhibit the painting publically in Rome in order to show it under more favourable viewing conditions "for the satisfaction of Rome and myself."[88] Nevertheless, the duke declined the offer on the pretext that he lacked sufficient funds due to an upcoming Gonzaga wedding, and Rubens ultimately had the painting shipped back to Antwerp where it was installed in the funerary chapel of his recently deceased mother in St Michael's Abbey. Is it possible that the inset cult image of one of the most potent holy images in Rome – even in the form of Rubens's purely referential iteration – would have made the *Chiesa Nuova* altarpiece too "ecclesiastical" for a secular environment? When considered against the evidence of Cardinal Scipione's acquisition of Raphael's *Entombment* as well as Caravaggio's other rejected altarpieces, it seems possible that the perceived fitness (or lack thereof) of altarpieces as gallery paintings was a consideration in their relocation to secular settings.

IV. 1620-1650: Princes, Dukes, and Cardinals

Similar distinctions in the types of altarpieces that private collectors sought can be observed in the Medici family's acquisitions of altarpieces in the following decades. For example,

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[87]Karen Buttler argues that an eighteenth-century Dutch engraving by Jacob de Wit represents a revised *modello* of the rejected altarpiece and indicates that Rubens altered it to make it more suitable as a gallery painting. Based on a comparison between the engraving and the painting, Buttler suggests that Rubens also repainted the figure of S. Flavia Domatilla into a "*bella veneziana*" intended to appeal to a (male) collector. This hypothesis is compelling, but, given the uncertain origins of the engraving, demands technical investigation, which is currently underway; Buttler 2011.

[88] Peter Paul Rubens to Annibale Chieppo, 2 February 1608: "Mi resolveró di levarlo d'esponerlo nella medesima chiesa in publico a meglior luce, per sodisfattione di Roma e mia insieme." The exhibition took place on or about 20 February 1608 in the Chiesa Nuova.

when Cosimo II's brother, Cardinal Carlo de' Medici, acquired Fra Bartolommeo's *Salvator Mundi* altarpiece from the Billi chapel in the Annunziata around 1631, the altarpiece was disassembled with the central image of Christ and the Evangelists (fig. 84) installed in his chapel at the Casino di S. Marco, while the flanking panels of the prophets Isaiah and Job went directly into the gallery (fig. 85).[89]

The three panels each depict a monumental figure set within a classicial niche: the main panel presents Christ standing triumphantly on a pedestal elevated above the four Evangelists, while the flanking panels portray each saint seated between two pilasters. But in the context of a collection in which the operative criterion is taste, the triumphant images of Christ as Redeemer – a powerful symbol of the core spiritual truth of salvation – may have been thematically inappropriate for a secular setting (or rather the secular setting would have been inappropriate for it). Certainly the liturgical significance of the central image was enhanced by its formal characteristics, which adhered to the conventions of the *sacra conversazione* format. The prophets, on the other hand, were comparatively unproblematic in subject as well as composition. Isaiah and Job, who foretold the Birth and Resurrection of Christ, iconographically complemented the central panel; but as individual religious personages, they were not as theologically "charged" as the sacramental main panel. Indeed, Old Testament subjects figured prominently in the development of new genres of gallery paintings. Around this time, Rubens referred to the sorts of pictures that he made of Old

[89] The altarpiece had been commissioned by Salvatore Billi for his chapel in SS. Annunziata and was likely finished 1516. By 1603 the family line was extinguished and the chapel was ceded to Lorenzo de' Soldani, who later sold the paintings to Cardinal Carlo. For the Billi altarpiece, see *L'età di Savonarola* 1996, nos. 25-27, pp. 115-22. The paintings are recorded in Cardinal Carlo's 1666 post-mortem inventory of the Casino di S. Marco, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 758, no. 72; fol. 4v, no. 370, fol. 21v; no. 381, fol. 22r.

Testament subjects as "*galanteria*," which he defined as "neither sacred nor profane, although taken from the Holy Scripture."[90] In this sense, Fra Bartolommeo's *Isaiah* and *Job*, as individual paintings, could be readily admired for their Raphaelesque monumentality and elegant, torsional postures.

Conversely, when Cardinal Carlo acquired Fra Bartolommeo's *Pietà* in 1619 (fig. 86) from the high altar of the church of S. Jacopo tra' Fossi in Florence he had it drastically cut down and repainted in the style of the pared-down, meditative devotional paintings made fashionable by Caravaggio and his followers (fig. 87).[91] The panel was shortened along the top by about one third of its original height, transforming the characteristic vertical format of the altarpiece into the horizontal format of the easel painting.[92] The brightly coloured background depicting Golgotha was repainted as a tenebristic, stark space, obliterating along with it the figures of Sts Peter and Paul who stood on either side behind Christ, the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, and John the Evangelist. Eliminating the standing figures also helped to

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[90] Peter Paul Rubens, 26 May 1608: "Vero originale i suggietto nè sacro nè profano per dir cosi benche cavato della sacra scrittura;" Brown 2001, p. 290. For more on religious subjects as gallery paintings in the seventeenth century, see Brown 2001.

[91] There are no known documents relating to the commission of the *Pietà*, although a number of preparatory drawings for the work survive. It has been dated to 1510 to 1511 on stylistic grounds. It was seen by Vasari on the high altar of the church of S. Jacopo tra' Fossi. The altarpieces of the Augustinian church had been transferred in 1531 from the church and convent of S. Gallo, which had been destroyed down in the siege of Florence in 1529. Chris Fischer, in *L'età di Savonarola* 1996, no. 23, pp. 107-11, notes that it is generally assumed that patronage of the chapels remained consistent in the new church, in which case Fra Bartolommeo's *Pietà* would have been commissioned for the high altar of S. Gallo. Alternatively Lodovico Borgo, posits that the altarpiece was originally associated with the commission for the Certosa of Pavia, which had been abandoned following the dissolution of Fra Bartolommeo's partnership with Mariotto Albertinelli in 1513, before it was ultimately acquired by the church of S. Jacopo tra' Fossi; Borgo 1989.

[92] Although the overpainting has recently been cleaned, some sense of the original appearance of the entire altarpiece is provided by several known copies; Paolucci 1988.

suppress the dominant symmetry of the composition, which is rigidly arranged around an "X" configuration in a manner consistent with altarpiece traditions; the resultant composition rather took the form of an asymmetrical Lamentation grouping. In other words, the altarpiece was modified such that it became no longer recognizable as one: Fra Bartolommeo's early-sixteenth-century altarpiece instead took on the appearance of a caravaggesque gallery painting. It was not unheard of to adjust the dimensions of altarpieces in order to regularize the shape, as with the addition of spandrels to Sarto's *Annunciation* lunette, or to paint out unwanted figures; however, to transform the entire image was unusual.[93]

Cardinal Carlo's radical alterations to the Frate's original composition suggest that he was attentive to the possible disjunction between this highly structured and blatantly Eucharistic altarpiece and its new, secular setting in his residence at the Casino di S. Marco, where it was ultimately installed in the room adjacent to the gallery.[94] He was, by all accounts, a knowledgeable and sophisticated collector. He is known to have frequented Rome's collections with Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte, the renowned collector and connoisseur noted foremost for "discovering" Caravaggio.[95] Upon inheriting the Casino di

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[93] For example, in Carlo Cesare Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice* (Bologna, 1678), the pious collector, Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani (see also pp. 210-12 above) is chastised for altering his paintings: "Comprando tutto il dì questo eminentissimo Madonna di Francesco Francia e di Pietro Perugino, allora pure in tanta stima, e facendoli a lui aggiustare a suo capriccio: fa torto, gli venne detto un giorno, V.S. Illustrissima a dur in un istesso tempo: a questi antichi maestri così bravi, stimandoli degni di correzione; a me, che per servir Lei, son forzato ad esser così temerario, a fare un tal mancamento in porvi le mani;" quoted in *Caravaggio e i Giustiniani* 2002, p. 230.

[94] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 758, no. 289, fol. 17r. Fischer 1988, suggests that the repainting was intended to transform the altarpiece into an *Andachtsbild* meant for private meditation; however, its location in the public rooms of the Casino di S. Marco indicates that the painting would not have been used in such a strictly defined manner.

[95] For Cardinal Carlo de' Medici as a patron and collector, see Fumagalli 2001; Barocchi and Bertelà 2005, vol. 1, pp. 3-43, 94-105, 148-72. Del Monte's discovery of Caravaggio was first recounted in

S. Marco in 1621, although without Don Antonio's collection which had been absorbed into the Guardaroba, he began to build his own collections. Cardinal Carlo, as expected, demonstrated a clear taste for Florence's past masters. In addition to the Fra Bartolommeo altarpieces, he acquired Sarto's S. Ambrogio altarpiece in 1619 (fig. 88)[96] and *Annunciation with St Michael* from the Badia of S. Godenzo in 1627 (fig. 89),[97] and Filippino Lippi's *Adoration of the Magi* from the church of S. Donato a Scopeto sometime around 1627 (fig. 90).[98] Although no record of the S. Ambrogio altarpiece appears in subsequent inventories,[99] the other two altarpieces were hung among the public rooms of the Casino di S. Marco without having undergone alterations to the pictures. Both were narrative images executed in a lively manner; the *Adoration*, in particular, was a veritable *tour de force* that bore a direct pictorial relationship to Leonardo's unfinished version of the same subject

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Giovanni Baglione's *Le vite de' pittori, scultori, et architetti* (Rome, 1642), p. 136; quoted in Friedlaender 1955, p. 352. Much has been written on Del Monte due to his early patronage of Caravaggio and patronage of music; the most comprehensive study is Ważbiński 1994.

[96] The S. Ambrogio altarpiece was made for the Oratory of the Confraternity of S. Maria della Neve presso S. Ambrogio around 1515. The altarpiece has since been lost and is known rather through its replacement copy by Jacopo da Empoli that was installed when it was acquired by Cardinal Carlo. For the altarpiece, see Shearman 1961b; Shearman 1965, no. 37, vol. 2, pp. 225-26.

[97] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 758, no. 205, fol. 11v. Although Vasari attributed the painting to Sarto himself, there is some uncertainty about Sarto's authorship, and it is believed my many to be a studio painting. The altarpiece was bought in 1627 for 25 *scudi* and replaced with a copy, since lost, which was attributed by Baldinucci to Jacopo da Empoli. Shearman 1965, no. 6 (studio works), vol. 2, pp. 291-92; *Andrea del Sarto* 1986, no. 30, pp. 170-71.

[98] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 758, no. 284, fol. 16v. The *Adoration* was commissioned in 1496 for the high altar of the conventual church of S. Donato a Scopeto, the same project that Leonardo had abandoned in 1482. Zambrano and Nelson 2004, no. 52, pp. 594-96.

[99] The only record of the Cardinal Carlo's ownership of the painting comes via a notice in Bottari's edition of Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo*; Borghini/Bottari 1730, p. 342, note 1. Most of Cardinal Carlo's paintings would have been recorded in the post-mortem inventory of the Casino San Marco in 1667, which is the only inventory of his collection. The absence of the S. Ambrogio altarpiece may be due to the fact that he was known to have given away some of his paintings.

already in the Medici collections, which it had been commissioned to replace. Unlike Fra Bartolommeo's overtly liturgical *Billi* and *Pietà* altarpieces, such images could be integrated among the other paintings of his collection without any sense of disjuncture between the subject and its setting.

Similar patterns can be detected in the acquisitions among other members of the Medici family around that time. Under Cosimo II, the Palazzo Pitti, which became the Medici's principal residence under Ferdinando I, was the locus of Medicean collecting.[100] An entry dated 27 September 1620 from the diaries of Cesare Tinghi confirms that the corridor of Cosimo II's apartments had been transformed into a gallery boasting works by "the most talented painters ever, that is, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Pollaiuolo, Andrea del Sarto, Sebastiano del Piombo, Bronzino, Cigoli, and Santi di Tito ... and many other painters of the present day that include history paintings, portraits, battle scenes, and other similar pleasing subjects."[101] With an ambitious programme for collecting that demanded heavy representation of sixteenth-century Florentine painters, local altarpieces were, above, all, accessible.

In 1618, the church of S. Lucia at Settimello "donated" Sarto's altarpiece of the

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[100] For the development of the collections at the Pitti, see *Galleria Palatina* 1982; Chiarini 2000, Barocchi and Bertelà 2002, vol. 1, pp. 147-78.

[101] Cesare Tinghi, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, MS Capponi 260, vol. 2, fol. 270: " Sua altezza era tornato ad abitare le stanze di sopra del palazzo de' Pitti e li venne a memoria un bel pensiero, che una loggia in sul piano di dette stanze di lunghezza di passi 75 S.A. in quattro giorni la fece diventare una bella galleria adorna di molte figure e teste di marmo in su piedistallo di noce e la si fece parare di quadri di pittori di mano maggior talenti uomini che sieno stati al mondo, cioè di Raffaello d'Urbino, di Lionardo da Vinci, del Pollaiolo, di Andrea del Sarto ... e sono tutte pitture di storia, ritratti, cavalli et simili altre cose di garbo;" quoted in Mosco 1982, p. 31.

Archangel Raphael with Tobias, San Leonardo, and a Donor to Cosimo (fig. 91),[102] which appears in the 1637 inventory of the Palazzo Pitti in the gallery of Christine of Lorraine.[103] After Cosimo's death in 1621, his widow, Maria Maddalena and mother, Christine of Lorraine, who acted as co-regent of Florence during the minority of Ferdinando II, continued his efforts. Christine acquired Sarto's *Disputà* sometime before 1627 (fig. 92), having replaced the original in S. Jacopo tra' Fossi with a copy by Vannini, and installed it in her apartments.[104] In 1627, Maria Maddalena returned to the church to remove a third altarpiece – Sarto's *Annunciation* altarpiece (fig. 93) – which was also replaced with a copy by Vannini.[105] The painting was installed in a chapel at Poggio Imperiale, where it is recorded in

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[102] San Luigi 1785, p. XXXV: "All' altare di questa cappella eravi una bellissima Tavola dipinta da Andrea del Sarto, che fu generosamente, e senza veruna ricompensa, regalata da Giulio di Lorenzo Morelli al Cardinale di Toscana Gio. Carlo de' Medici." The altarpiece was commissioned in 1512 by Leonardo Morelli for the family chapel in S. Lucia; the family, however, had long since shifted the focus of their religious patronage to S. Giuseppe in Florence and presumably were willing to part with the altarpiece, especially if under pressure from the Medici. Nevertheless the family still attached great value to the painting: in addition to supplying the church with a substitute copy, Giulio Morelli, the great-grandson of the founding patron, Leonardo, had a canvas copy of the altarpiece made by Francesco Bianchi – significantly omitting the figures of Leonardo Morelli and his name saint. The copy was installed in the main salon of Morelli's residence as recorded in his post-mortem inventory of 10 March 1634 (Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Gherardi-Piccolomini 192): "Un quadro in tela èntrovi l'angiolo Raffaello e Tubbia alto braccia quattro incirca con ornamento tinto de noce filerato d'oro." Cf. Lydecker 1985, pp. 351-52.

[103] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 525, fol. 43v.

[104] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 525, fol. 41v. The painting is first mentioned in a 1627 letter concerning a copy by Ottavio Vannini. Later, in the *Microcosmo della pittura* (Cesena, 1657), Francesco Scannelli recorded that the painting hung above the door in the gallery; Scannelli 1657, p. 305. The *Disputà* is believed to have been commissioned by the Peri family for their chapel in S. Gallo and was transferred along with the rest of the altarpieces in the church to S. Jacopo tra' Fossi in 1531. Shearman 1965, no. 51, pp. 241-43; *Andrea del Sarto* 1986, no. 13, pp. 115-17.

[105] The altarpiece was commissioned by Taddeo di Dante da Castiglione for his chapel in the church of S. Gallo and was transferred in 1531 to the church of S. Jacopo tra' Fossi. Shearman 1965, no. 23, vol. 2, pp. 209-10; *Andrea del Sarto* 1986, no. 4, pp. 94-95. For the correspondence regarding Maria Maddalena's acquisition of the altarpiece, see Barocchi and Bertelà 2005, vol. 1, p. 35, note 131.

the inventory of 1654, retaining its function as an altarpiece.[106] But while Maria Maddalena was well known for her piety, her insistence on possessing the original altarpiece by Sarto, who, at that time, was arguably the most celebrated of Florence's Renaissance painters, indicates that its art historical value made it desirable also to devout collectors.[107] She also took Perugino's *Pietà* (fig. 94) from the conventual church of S. Giovannino detto della Calza, which appears in the same inventory hung in one of the public rooms,[108] and in 1628, she acquired Cigoli's *Vocation of St Peter* (fig. 95) from the Duomo in Livorno in exchange for a Crucifixion by Francesco Curradi, a less well regarded contemporary artist.[109] The 1637 inventory also records Sarto's Gambassi altarpiece in the Granducal apartments (fig. 96), which had been removed from the church of SS. Lorenzo e Onofrio and replaced with a copy.[110] Upon his succession in 1638, Ferdinando would continue to build the collection,

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[106] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 657, fol. 30v. By this time, Maria Maddalena had made the Villa at Poggio Imperiale her primary residence; Acanfora 2000.

[107] For Maria Maddalena as patron and collector, see Chiarini 2002, Barocchi and Bertelà 2005, vol. 1, pp. 22-37; Harness 2006, ch. 2, "'A More than Virile Prudence': Archduchess Maria Magdalena."

[108] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 657, vol. 35r. The *Pietà* was painted around 1493 for an altar in S. Giusto degli Ingesuati fuori dalla Porta a Pinti (where Perugino's *Agony and the Garden* and *Crucifixion with Saints* were also housed), before it was transferred to the church of S. Giovannino detto della Calza following the destruction of the monastery in 1531. In the *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine* (Florence, 1754, vol. 9, p. 104), Giuseppe Richa claims that the altarpiece was taken by Maria Maddalena during the 1610s at which time it was replaced with a copy by Ottavio Vannini; cf. Caneva 1984.

[109] The altarpiece was commissioned in 1604 by Niccolò Carducci, an agent of Ferdinando I, for his chapel in the Duomo at Livorno. The altarpiece was evidently incomplete at the time of Cigoli's death in 1613 and was finished by Giovanni Bilivert after 1616. In a 1628 biography of Cigoli by his nephew, Giovanni Battista Cardi, the altarpiece is described as being in the possession of Maria Maddalena ("è appresso l'Altezza Serenissima"). In a mid-century biography of Bilivert, the altarpiece is recorded in the "camera del Granduca." Matteoli 1980, no. 21, pp. 143-49.

[110] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 525, fol. 45r. The Gambassi altarpiece had been painted for Becuccio Bicchieraio da Gambassi in the 1520s for his chapel in the Benedictine church of SS. Lorenzo e Onofrio at Gambassi, where it was seen in a pastoral visit of 1576. The altarpiece was

and acquired the *Passerini Assumption* (fig. 97), which had stood on the high altar of S. Antonio Abbate at Cortona, the following year.[111]

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The Medici were aggressive when it came to the business of acquiring altarpieces. Absolutism meant that they could use "princely pressure"[112] in order to get what they wanted. Indeed, would-be "spoliators" required political power to favourably influence church authorities and placate local officials who frequently had to contend with a vocal and genuinely obstructive local opposition. Thus, it was often the practical matter of political territory that dictated which altarpieces were removed, and by whom, during the first half of the seventeenth century. Even the Medici's considerable acquisitions, as discussed above, did not extend beyond Florence and its environs. This was true across the Italian peninsula. According to Malvasia, during Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani's tenure as papal legate to Bologna (1606-1611), he helped himself to Francesco Francia's *St Sebastian* altarpiece in the S. Maria della Misericordia (fig. 98), which was highly regarded by the Carracci and other artists of the Bolognese School, after his initial attempts to buy the altarpiece were rebuffed,

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replaced with a copy (which has been attributed alternatively to Jacopo da Empoli and Francesco Curradi) when it was removed to the Pitti collections. This copy was later transferred to the Pieve of S. Maria a Chianni at Gambassi. Shearman 1965, no. 76, vol. 2, pp. 267; *Andrea del Sarto* 1986, no. 19, pp. 134-36.

[111] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 725, fol. 55r. The *Assumption* had been commissioned in 1526 by the heirs of Margherita Passerini according to her testament. Shearman 1965, no. 78, vol. 2, pp. 268-69; *Andrea del Sarto* 1986, no. 21, pp. 140-43. For Ferdinando's activities as a collector, see Barocchi and Bertelà 2005, pp. 38-43; 115-25.

[112] I borrow this term from the Ronald Lightbown`s classic pair of essays on the spoliation of altarpieces; Lightbown 1963a/1963b.

leaving behind a "bad and poorly made" copy in its place.[113] In 1613, Don Giovanni Siro, the last prince of Correggio, bought Correggio's triptych of *God the Father with Sts Bartholomew and John* from the high altar of S. Maria della Misericordia and had it replaced with a copy.[114] The papal nephew, Cardinal Antonio Barberini, one of Rome's most prominent patrons and collectors, was appointed legate to Urbino in 1631 upon its annexation by the papacy and used the opportunity to cherry-pick pieces from the estate of Francesco Maria della Rovere to enrich his own collections. Finding the ducal palace to be stripped bare (the paintings had already gone to the duke's daughter, Vittoria, now married to Ferdinando II, Grand Duke of Tuscany), he promptly removed Fra Carnevale's striking perspectival panels of the *Birth of the Virgin* (fig. 99) and *Presentation of the Virgin* (fig. 100) from the local church of S. Maria della Bella.[115] They were replaced with copies by

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[113] Malvasia 1678, vol. 1, 47 : "Il Cardinal Giustiniani Legato di Bologna nel 1606 non potendone otternerne l'acquisto da que' religiosi per qual si fosse gran prezzo offerto loro, facendone ricavare almeno una copia, questa ben' anche cattiva e mal fatta riposta nella stessa cornice, vi restò, come anch'oggi si vede, in luogo dell'originale." Malvasia describes the perfection of its form as rivalling the ancient statue of *Antinoüs* in Rome, and recounts Francesco Albani's anecdote that Annibale Carracci kept a drawing after the altarpiece annotated with measurements of the proportions of the figure of St Sebastian. The painting, since lost, and is only known through Agostino Carracci's engraving after the picture; Dempsey 1986, p. 70, note 59.

[114] A document of 23 November 1613 records that Don Siro had received from the Confraternity of S. Maria "tres imagines seu effigies pictas manu qu. Egregii Viri Antonii de Corrigio Pictoris famossimi, S. Dei Patris Omnipotentis, S. Johannis & S. Bartholomei." In a document of 18 December 1612, the paintings were valued at one hundred ducats each. In 1635 the paintings were deposited with Vincenzo Calcagni to be transferred to Conte Alessandro Gonzaga of Novellara for safe keeping during Don Siro's exile. After Don Siro's death in 1645, the paintings were returned in order to be sold to Conte Francesco Bonsi, after which there is no further trace of them. Gould 1976, pp. 280-82. It is possible that Don Siro had taken other altarpieces as is suggested by a 1638 letter written by Marchese Francesco Montecuccoli, the major-domo of Francesco I d'este, in which he states that other altarpieces by Correggio had been removed from local churches in the past ("n'aveva avuto a' tempi passati in varie occasioni due o tre levati di chiese o d'altri luoghi parmi anche senza ricompensa);" Gould 1976, p. 202.

[115] For the Barberini panels see, *From Filippo Lippi* 2005, pp. 258-66. Although the paintings have generally been presumed to form the side panels of a Marian triptych, more recently, Livia Carloni has

Claudio Ridolfi and subsequently installed in the Palazzo Barberini in Rome, where they were described in the 1644 inventory as narrative, genre paintings ("perspectives with some women").[116]

In 1638, the new appointed Spanish Viceroy of Naples, Ramiro Núñez de Guzmán, the duke of Medina helped himself to two altarpieces from S. Domenico with the assistance of the General of the Dominicans, Padre Niccolò Ridolfi, one of which was Raphael's *Madonna del Pesce* (fig. 101).[117] The prior of the church, however, did not consent to the transaction, and wrote so many letters to Rome condemning Ridolfi's actions that in 1642 he was expelled from the city at the duke's behest.[118] Upon the duke's return to Spain in 1644, the painting was presented to Philip IV. In 1655, the Spanish king set his sights on Raphael's *Visitation* (fig. 102) from the Branconio chapel in S. Silvestro in Aquila, an episode that provides one of the more colourful anecdotes attesting to the tenacity of the local resistance to the removal of church patrimony as well as the determination of collectors. Although Philip IV had the consent of the Branconio family, the local governor, and the pope himself,

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proposed that they may have instead formed the doors to the *armadio*, or reliquary cupboard, which is mentioned in two pastoral visits made before 1631; Carloni 2005. In either case, the panels still belonged to the ecclesiastical furnishings of the church. For Cardinal Antonio Barberini as a patron and collector, see Haskell 1980, pp. 54-56.

[116] In the 1644 inventory of Cardinal Antonio Barberini, the *Birth of the Virgin* is described as "un quadro in tavola che rappresentata una prospettiva con alcune donne che s'incontrano" and the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* is similarly described as "un quadro simile che rappresentata una prospettiva con alcune donne che vanno n chiesa." According to the inventory, both paintings were hung in the room next to the main salon; Aronberg Lavin 1975, nos. 13, 14, p. 158.

[117] The *Madonna del Pesce* was painted around 1515 for the chapel of Giovanni Battista del Duce in S. Domenico in Naples, where it was seen by Marc'Antonio Michiel in 1524; Meyer zur Capellen 2005, no. 54, pp. 117-23. Lightbown 1963a, p. 101.

[118] Miccio 1846, doc. 219; Lightbown 1963a, p. 101.

the chapter closed the church upon hearing of his plans, and dispatched their abbot to Rome to protest. The stand-off went on for two weeks before the impatient Spaniards responded by beginning to tear down the wall from the outside, although they were soon halted by the arrival of the Vicar General.[119] In 1662, Philip would add to his collection with Raphael's *Spasimo di Sicilia* (fig. 103) from S. Maria dello Spasimo in Palermo, for which he paid the considerable sum of four thousand ducats to the church and an additional five hundred to the prior, effectively circumventing the expected protestations.[120]

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Only Francesco I d'Este's ambitious acquisition of local altarpieces in Modena during the 1640s rivalled the Medici in Florence. Unlike the Medici, whose proclivities as collectors can only be deduced from the types of works they acquired, Francesco was forthright in his ambitions as a collector. Upon his accession as Duke of Modena in 1629, Francesco embarked on a campaign to restore grandeur and stature to the beleaguered House of Este, which had been deposed from the ancient family seat in Ferrara by Clement VIII in 1598 on the pretext that the family had no legitimate heir. Francesco used extravagant patronage to cultivate an image of political strength, which, although incommensurate with his actual

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[119] The *Visitation*, a workshop painting completed by April 1520, was commissioned by a relative of Giovanni Battista Branconio dell'Aquila (for whom Raphael designed the Palazzo Branconio) to be placed in a confraternity chapel in S. Silvestro at Aquila; Meyer zur Capellen 2005, no. A7, pp. 244-46. For the events surrounding the removal of the altarpiece, see Pansa 1911; Lightbown 1963a, pp. 101-02.

[120] Although the circumstances of the commission are unknown, the *Spasimo* was completed around 1517, as indicated by a dated reproductive engraving by Agostino Veneziano; Meyer zur Capellen 2005, no. 59, pp. 150-57. On the taste for Raphael in Spain, see Perini 2005. For the sale of the altarpiece, see *Museo del Prado* 1963, no. 298, pp. 525-26. For Philip IV as a collector, see Brown 1991, ch. 9, "Collectors and Collections."

power, he believed to be necessary to rebuild the family's reputation and secure new allies.[121] Of particular concern to the duke, was the state of the neglected collections, which had been depleted by Clement's nephew, Pietro Aldobrandini, who, as the appointed papal legate to Ferrara, had helped himself to the Este's abandoned treasures, including the famed *Bacchanals* by Giovanni Bellini and Titian among other things. For Francesco, replenishing the collections meant not only securing rare works by past masters, but also consolidating his reputation as an enlightened and discerning patron. In 1651, he famously paid Bernini the exorbitant sum of three thousand *scudi* for his portrait bust – the equivalent of what Innocent X had paid the sculptor for the Four Rivers Fountain in Rome and far more than the 150 *scudi* Bernini's rival Alessandro Algardi negotiated for the same commission – explaining that in doing so he would "preserve [his] reputation of respecting *virtù*" (clearly Francesco was familiar with Vasari's accounts of stingy patrons).[122]

Francesco immediately trained his eyes on altarpieces by Correggio which were conveniently located in the Duchy of Modena, still under Este control.[123] By that time, Correggio counted among the most revered artists of the sixteenth century and the foremost exponent of the Lombard school. From 1638 to 1649, Francesco used a combination of force and subterfuge to extract most of Correggio's altarpieces from the region. As the first altarpiece to be taken by Francesco, the reaction to the removal of the *Rest on the Flight to*

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[121] For Francesco I's activities as patron and collector, see Venturi 1882, ch. IV, "La Galleria di Francesco I"; Southern 1988, ch. 2, "Restoring the Ancient Splendour;" *Sovrane passioni* 1998.

[122] Francesco I d'Este to Cardinal Rinaldo d'Este, August 1650: "Col far restar contento il Bernino, penso di conservarmi il credito di stimar la virtù et i virtuosi;" quoted in Frascetti 1900, p. 233. For the commission, see Lavin 1998.

[123] Lightbown 1963b.

Egypt (fig. 104) from the chapel of the Conception in S. Francesco at Correggio was particularly acute.[124] When the altarpiece was found missing on 12 April 1638 (in its place was a copy by Jean Boulanger who gained access to the original by permission of the Este governor, Annibale Molza), the city councillors led a contingent of about two hundred citizens to the ante-room of the governor's palace to demand its return. Such was the hostility among the populace that the friars deemed it necessary to send two envoys to Modena to request protection from the duke. City officials petitioned the pope, the Sacred Congretation of Bishops and Regulars, and the provincial and general governing bodies of the Franciscans.[125] For their part, the duke's agents could not understand why the Correggians should protest, given that Don Siro had already taken an altarpiece by the artist without raising any objections.[126] Although given the intentional secrecy and subterfuge involved in swapping Correggio's altarpiece for Boulanger's copy, which presumes expected resistance, their bafflement rings false. Rather, compared to the previous incident, it seems likely that it was the high quality and fame of the painting that mattered – a distinction made by the Correggians themselves in their letter to Molza.[127]

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[124] The *Rest on the Flight to Egypt* was commissioned by Francesco Munari for the chapel of the Conception in the church of S. Francesco at Correggio around 1520. Vincenzo I Gonzaga had unsuccessfully tried to acquire either this altarpiece or the *Madonna of St Francis* from the church in 1598; Luzio 1974, p. 112. It was secretly taken by Francesco in 1638 and replaced with a copy by Jean Boulanger, which remains *in situ*. In 1649 it was sent to Florence in exchange for a painting by Andrea del Sarto. Gould 1976, pp. 208-09.

[125] Gould 1976, pp. 208-09. For the protest against the removal of the painting and response from the Este court, see Tiraboschi 1781-86, vol. 6, pp. 253-55.

[126] Cf. note 114 above. This point was also raised by Governor Molza in his report to the Este court on the situation in Correggio. Lightbown 1963b, pp. 197-98; Gould 1976, pp. 202-03

[127] "Et perché per avanti da pochi giorni si era rappresentato un Pittore con lettere dirette al Governator Molzi, che avea fatta tal copia probabilmente si deve credere, che tal ratto sia stato fatto per opera del

It should be noted that Francesco had copies or new altarpieces installed in place of Correggio's altarpieces, although this did little to placate local authorities. Protests were launched against the removal of the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 70) in 1640 , which was taken under cover of night from the Pratonero chapel in S. Prospero in Reggio.[128] The *Madonna di Albinea* (fig. 105) was removed from S. Prospero at Albinea in 1647 only after jailing the archpriest, Don Claudio Ghedini, who argued that the altarpiece was the rightful property of the church and not the Comunità, which had been charged by Francesco to extract the altarpiece on his behalf.[129] Only the *Madonna with St George* (fig. 106) and the *Madonna with St Sebastian* (fig. 107) seem to have been acquired without incident. In both cases, however, the removal of the altarpiece may have been desired: the former was removed in 1649 and replaced by the duke with an entirely new composition by no less an artist than Guercino;[130] while the panels of the latter had sustained severe splitting, in which

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medesimo Pittore con intervento & intelligenza di qualche Padre di detto Convento od altri; che intanto il Popolo avvertito del furto fatto della qualità del quadro così grato & estimato da tutto il Popolo in ogni tempo, & riconoscendo il tutto per un afflittione particolare, convocò il Configlio Generale;" quoted in Tiraboschi 1781-86, vol. 6, p. 254.

[128] The *Adoration of the Shepherds* was ordered by Alberto Pratonero sometime before 1522 for his chapel in S. Prospero at Reggio Emilia. Alfonso II d'Este had already tried to acquire the altarpiece in 1587, as discussed in note 27 above. The altarpiece was removed in 1640 and eventually substituted with a copy by Boulanger, which is still in the original frame; Lightbown 1963b pp. 198-99; Gould 1976, pp. 204-06. In 1746, it was sold by Francesco III along with approximately one hundred works in the Este collection at Modena to Augustus III, King of Poland and Prince of Saxony, whose own collection would form the nucleus of the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden. So esteemed was "*La notte*" that Augusto III commissioned a second copy by Giuseppe Nogari to compensate Francesco III for the lost original; *Sovrane passioni* 1998, no. 8. On the sale of the Este collection, see Weber 1998.

[129] The *Madonna di Albinea* was commissioned in 1517 for the church of S. Prospero at Albinea. Francesco removed the altarpiece in 1647, and replaced it with a copy by Boulanger, which is still in the church; the original, however, has since been lost. Lightbown 1963b, pp. 198-99; Gould 1976, pp. 278-79.

[130] The *Madonna of St George* was painted for the high altarpiece for the chapel of the Confraternity of

case a new substitute would have been preferable.[131]

Although Francesco had a clear predilection for Correggio, he also sought out works from local churches by other notable artists. He took three altarpieces by Dosso Dossi from Modenese churches: the *Madonna Enthroned with St Sebastian and St George* from an unknown church (fig. 108);[132] the *Madonna with St George and St Michael* from S. Agostino (fig. 109),[133] and the *Four Fathers* from the Duomo (fig. 110).[134] He almost certainly removed Cima da Conegliano's *Lamentation* from S. Niccolò at Carpi (fig. 111).[135] Beyond

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S. Pietro Martire in Modena sometime before 1530. It was also sold to Augustus III in 1746; Gould 1976, pp. 206-07.

[131] The *Madonna of St Sebastian* was painted for the Confraternity of St Sebastian for their chapel in the church of S. Sebastiano at Modena. It was taken by Francesco I sometime before 1657 when it was recorded in his collection in Francesco Scannelli's *Microcosmo della pittura*; Scannelli 1657, p. 287. The altarpiece was replaced with a copy by Boulanger, which is still *in situ*. It was included in the sale to Augustus III in 1746; Gould 1976, pp. 203-04.

[132] Little is known of the *Madonna Enthroned with St Sebastian and St George*. Peter Humfrey dates the painting to the the 1510s on purely stylistic grounds; 1998, p. 12. There are no records of it having entered the collection, but it is surely among the "tre tavole straodinarie di Dossi" paintings by Dossi described in the Este collections mentioned in Scannelli 1657, p. 307; cf. *Sovrane Passione* 1998, no. 92, pp. 308-09.

[133] The *Madonna Enthroned with St George and St Michael* was commissioned in 1520 for the church of S. Agostino in Modena; Humfrey 1998, p. 13. Alfonso II d'Este had already tried to acquire the painting in 1584 before it was purchased by Francesco in 1649; *Sovrane Passione* 1998, no. 93, pp. 310-11. It is described in the collection in Scannelli 1657 , p. 317, and appears in the 1663 post-mortem inventory of Alfonso IV; Bentini 1993, p. 60.

[134] The *Four Fathers* was commissioned in 1527 by the Bellencini family and formed the central panel of a polyptych installed in their chapel in the Duomo at Modena; Humfrey 1998, pp. 17-18. It is clearly described in the collection ("i Quattro santi Dottori della chiesa") in Scannelli 1657, p. 317, and appears in the 1663 inventory; Bentini 1993, p. 60.

[135] Cima's *Lamentation* was commissioned by Alberto Pio, lord of Carpi, around 1495 for his funerary chapel in S. Niccolò. Although it was seen on the high altar of the Church by Padre Malezappi in 1580, by 1624 it was evidently back in the Pio family chapel where it was seen by Canon Pozzuoli. Humfrey 1983, no. 95, pp. 127-28; *Sovrane Passione* 1998, no. 99, pp. 322-23. Although there are no records of the removal of the altarpiece, it was recorded in the 1663 Este inventory in the casino of Giacomo Monti; Bentini 1993, p. 68.

the duchy's borders, Francesco dispatched his agents to seek out works by artists representing other Italian schools.[136] Este diplomats and agents scoured major artistic centres for works that would meet their patrons exacting standards – as one agent put it, the duke "held no regard for ordinary pictures, even those of more than mediocre worth."[137] Only pictures of the highest quality were acceptable, a challenging proposition in the midst of what was becoming a highly competitive art market. His Venetian agent, Clemente Molli, purchased Tintoretto's *Madonna in Glory with Saints* (fig. 112), which likely had already been removed from S. Benedetto at Venice in 1629, when the church was renovated.[138] Although Molli had advised Francesco that the painting was not among his most beautiful works and that it was in poor condition and overpriced, as a large work by an important artist of the Venetian school, such deficiencies evidently could be overlooked.[139] Francesco leveraged his own collection to gain works that would have been otherwise difficult to acquire. In 1649, he exchanged several of his own paintings, including Correggio's *Rest on the Flight to Egypt* – one of the artist's earliest and more conservative altarpieces – for works in the Medici

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[136] For the activities Francesco's agents, see Venturi 1882, pp. 238ff.; Mancini 1998a; Southern 1988, ch. 3, "Ways and Means."

[137] Antonio Benzo to Francesco d'Este, 9 August 1953: "Ma che delle ordinarie anche più della mediocrità non ne fa conto;" quoted in Venturi 1882, p. 240.

[138] The *Madonna in Glory with Saints* altarpiece was commissioned for the high altar of S. Benedetto. Nothing is known of the painting's whereabouts between the time that the new altarpiece by Carlo Maratta was installed on the high altar of S. Benedetto in 1629 and its acquisition by Francesco in 1653; Paul 2005, pp. 390ff.; *Sovrane Passione* 1998, no. 103, pp. 330-31. It was later recorded in the 1663 Este inventory in the casino of Giacomo Monti; Bentini 1993, p. 67.

[139] Clemente Molli to Francesci I d'Este, 2 January 1653: "Quello del Tintoretto fu una Pala d'altare … Veramente è del Tintoretto, ma non delle più belle cose, il quadro anco è stato accomodato e datali vernice di fresco et ha una cucitura molto apparente per il longo, il prezzo delli ducento D.ti che se ne dimanda anzi scudi d'argento a me par grave, et centocinquanta D.ti da lire sei e soldi 4 potrebbe essere conveniente;" Venturi 1882, ch. 4, doc. X.

collection, most notably among them, Andrea del Sarto's *Sacrifice of Isaac*.[140]

But even with such resources at his disposal, Francesco's efforts were not always successful. According to Carlo Cesare Malvasia's 1678 biography of Annibale Carracci, the duke set his sights on the Bolognese painter's *St Roch Distributing Alms* (fig. 113), one of the lateral paintings from the Confraternity of S. Rocco's chapel in S. Prospero at Reggio Emilia.[141] Malvasia recounts that the excellence of the painting threatened to overshadow the works in the duke's collection, such that he was advised by the court painter, Flaminio Torri, that "until he removed it from that location and placed it among his other magnificent works, his gallery would always be considered defective."[142] Although the duke had offered the considerable sum of eight hundred doubloons in order to outbid competing offers made on behalf of agents of Louis XIV, the confraternity decided not to part with the painting. In 1661, Francesco's heir, Alfonso IV, finally succeeded in acquiring the painting along with its

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[140] Francesco's agent in Florence, Geminiano Poggi, apparently also considered another version of the same painting in the collection of Cardinal Carlo de' Medici – presumably the earliest of the three versions of the *Sacrifice of Isaac*, which Sarto had abandoned half-finished – but rejected it due to its incomplete state. Geminiano Poggi to Francesco d'Este, 26 October 1658: "Mi disse che questa mattina voleva [Cardinale Carlo] stesso essere nella Galeria per farmi vedere le pitture … Ritrovassimo, che de' quadri d'Andrea del Sarto non v'era cola il migliore dell'Abramo, che se servì per lo primo abbozzo;" Venturi 1882, ch. 4, doc. XIII. The painting does not appear in the 1666 inventory of the Casino di S. Marco; however, Cardinal Carlo may have given it away as he had been known to do with other paintings. Shearman 1963, no. 94, vol. 2, pp. 280-81..

[141] The *St Roch Distributing Alms* was commissioned by the Confraternity of S. Rocco for the church of S. Prospero in Reggio Emilia in 1588, although it was not completed until 1595, as documented in two letters between Annibale and the confraternity; Posner 1971, no. 86, vol. 2, pp. 35-37. It was recorded in the 1663 Este inventory; Bentini 1993, p. 61.

[142] Malvasia 1678, vol. 1, p. 399: "Mantenendo poi l'eccellenza di questo gran quadro un potente, e perpetuo contrasto all'inarrivabile Galeria Estense, onde col comun parere, il nostro Flaminio Pittore di quella Corte giongesse a replicare più volte al Duca Francesco, che sino ch'egli no lo levava di quel luogo, e fra gli altri suoi così eccelsi non lo poneva, mutilate sempre ella saria detta…"; translated in Summerscale 2000, pp. 160-61.

pendant, Camillo Procaccini's *St Roch Giving the Sacrament to the Plague-Stricken* (fig. 114), the chapel's high altarpiece, Annibale's *Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 115), and Annibale's altarpiece of the *Madonna of St Matthew* from the merchant's chapel in the same church (fig. 116).[143]

Francesco's gravest disappointment, however, was his failure to obtain Raphael's *Madonna of Foligno* (fig. 117). Francesco's agents had scoured Italy for paintings by the artist, but had turned up only minor works of questionable authenticity or poor condition.[144] None of these other prospects could rival the *Madonna of Foligno*. The painting, which depicts the Madonna and Child *in nubibus* with Saints John the Baptist, Francis, and Jerome presenting the donor, Sigismondo de' Conti (the secretary of Julius II), was a mature work of monumental proprotions and good condition and, importantly, it had received rapturous praise from Vasari. Poggi first reported on the *Madonna of Foligno*, which was housed in the convent of S. Anna in Foligno, in a letter to the duke sometime before June 1650, noting that its "exquisite style" would make an ideal companion piece for Correggio's *Adoration of the*

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[143] Posner 1971, no. 45, vol. 2, pp. 20-21. Alfonso also acquired Lodovico Carracci's altarpiece of *S. Bernardino Liberating Carpi* from the church of S. Bernardino at Carpi. In 1673, however, the altarpiece was restored to the church by Alfonso's widow at the behest of the confraternity because the copy had not been delivered before Alfonso's untimely death in 1662. The altarpiece remained there until 1670, when it once again moved to the Este collection, and the copy was finally installed. For the documents of the Lodovio's altarpiece, see Campori 1855, pp. 134-36.

[144] Geminiano Poggi to Francesco I d'Este, 27 July 1650: "La rarità dell'opere di Raffaele da Urbino porta seco dappertutto difficoltà non ordinarie, per haverne qualcheduna;" Mancini 1998b, doc. 7. Francesco's agents pursued several other propects, none of which came to fruition: the *Coronation* altarpiece from the Oddi chapel in S. Francesco at Perugia; an unidentified *Madonna and Child* from the Capuchin monastery of Monte Santo at Sassoferrato; two paintings of questionable attribution belonging to Roman collectors; the *Madonna with St Luke* (then believed to be by Raphael) in the Accademia di S. Luca in Rome, which was deemed to be in unsatisfactory condition; and the lunette of *God the Father* left behind when Borghese had taken the Baglione *Entombment*. Mancini 1998b.

Shepherds.[145] Appended to the letter was Tommaso Guidoni's eyewitness account, which describes it as the "most beautiful painting by Raphael that he had ever seen."[146] Francesco evidently paid little heed to Guidoni's caution that "others had already attempted to buy the altarpiece." Its acquisition became an obsession for the duke, who, soon after receiving the report, wrote to his brother Cardinal Rinaldo that "just the thought of being able to have the Raphael gives me the greatest pleasure."[147]

The altarpiece had been transferred to Foligno by Sigismondo's niece, the abbess of S. Anna, by 1565 from its original location over the high altar of S. Maria in Aracoeli at Rome. As part of a larger renovation of the church, Pius IV had Raphael's altarpiece replaced with a small byzantine icon of the St Luke Madonna (set within an elaborate baroque enframement) associated with the founding of the church, a transformation that was in keeping with the new Counter-Reformation return to the early Christian church.[148] Although Pius's priority was the restoration of the cult image, one wonders if the fame of Raphael's altarpiece had become disruptive. Indeed, even in its new, comparatively remote location, the *Madonna of Foligno* attracted such noted visitors as Henri of Bourbon, the prince of Condé, and Archduke Leopold Wilhelm.[149] The nuns had turned down offers to

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[145] Geminiano Poggi to Francesco I d'Este, n.d. [Spring 1650]: "Un quadro di Raffaele d'isquisita maniera, che accompagnerebbe le notte del Correggio;" Mancini 1998b, doc. 1.

[146] Tommaso Guidoni to Geminiano Poggi, n.d. [Spring 1650]: "Trovai bene à foligni in una chiesa di monache il più bel quadro ch'io habbia mai visto di Raffaele;" Mancini 1998b, doc. 1.

[147] Francesco I d'Este to Cardinal Rinaldo d'Este, 18 June 1650: "La sola imaginzatione di poter havere il quadro di Raffaello mi dà un gusto grandissimo;" Mancini 1998b, doc. 3.

[148] For the history of the altarpiece, see Ferino Pagden 1990, pp. 177-79; Nucciarelli and Severini 2007; Meyer zur Capellen 2008, no. 52

[149] For the visitors to the *Madonna of Foligno*, see Faloci Pulagnani 1890.

purchase the altarpiece from Grand Duke Cosimo II in 1616, as well as the noted Roman collector, Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi, in 1622. Ludovisi had been approached by the bishop of Foligno, Porfirio Feliciani, and the governor of the city, Claudio Castelli, both of whom urged the nuns to sell the the altarpiece in order to offset their debts. Even so, Ludovisi took the extra measure of having Cardinal Ippolito Aldobrandini appeal to the nuns on his behalf – all to no avail.[150] Poggi, however, would not be dissuaded and pursued the altarpiece for nearly three years. After the nuns rejected his offers, he visited Foligno in November 1652 to personally plead the duke's case. Having finally seen the altarpiece for himself, he declared it superior to both Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* in Piacenza and the *St Cecilia* altarpiece.[151] Poggi enlisted Orazio Vitelleschi, a Folignese nobleman, to petition the nuns via their father confessor. However, in December 1652, Vitelleschi conceded defeat. In a letter to Poggi regarding his most recent negotiations, he reported that the nuns had responded that "they would not sell the painting for any price."[152]

At Modena, the altarpieces acquired by Francesco were put on display alongside other works, both sacred and profane, in the gallery of the ducal apartments, as recorded in the 1663 post-mortem inventory of his heir, Alfonso IV.[153] Francesco's gallery is more

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[150] The requests of Ludovisi and Aldobrandini are transcribed in Faloci Pulagnani 1890, pp. 154-55.

[151] Mancini 1998b, doc. 20. In subsequent correspondence, Girolamo Graziani chastised Poggi for excessively praising the altarpiece and thereby fuelling the duke's desire to acquire it, given the increasing certainly that the nuns could not be persuaded to sell their altarpiece.

[152] Orazio Vitelleschi to Geminiano Poggi, 28 December 1652: "Le monache mi havevano fatto rispondere non volere vendere il quadro per nesun prezzo. L'istessa risposta intend essersi data qualche tempo fà alli Ser.mi di Toscano che applicarono all'istessa compra;" Mancini 1998b, doc. 37.

[153] "Inventario e descritione de mobile e suppelitili" dated 2 January 1663. The "Inventario de quadri di sua Altezza Serenissima" is transcribed in Bentini 1993.

evocatively described, however, in Francesco Scannelli's treatise on painting, the *Microcosmo della pittura* (Cesena, 1657), which was dedicated to the duke. Scannelli, who counted among Francesco's network agents and advisors, makes frequent reference to the works in the collection throughout the treatise; but in the chapter on Correggio, he takes the opportunity to lavish praise on Francesco and his gallery, crediting the duke for his discernment in bringing together Correggio's paintings as an achievement equal to the works themselves.[154] For Scannelli, Francesco's gallery was the ideal venue in which art could be scrutinized to understand and demonstrate the theories of art as explained in the *Microcosmo*. As he describes, in the gallery "one can observe the diversity of its holdings, and with comfort, can distinguish the inferior ones from the good ones, and again, from the more perfect ones."[155] In writing the *Microcosmo*, Scannelli's familiarity with the ducal gallery was itself instrumental in shaping his ideas about art, especially his reassessment of Lombard art, in which Correggio is championed as surpassing both Raphael and Titian in his ideal synthesis of the invention and composition of the Roman-Tuscan school and the naturalistic colour of the Venetian school.[156] For less seasoned visitors, however, the didactic lessons of the collection could be overwhelmed by the sheer spectacle of the famous works amassed

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[154] Scannelli 1657, p. 301: "S'osservano … tutti dipinti infallibili del gran Correggio, e gli ultimi sono in ordine all'opere sue dell'infimo grado; i quali se bene vengono tutti egualmente creduti dal dignissimo Possessore per parti sicuri di tanto virtuoso; sono nondimeno riconosciuti a proportione del loro essere, e come tali stimati, e resi all'occorrenze famosi, perché in fatti un tal Prencipe come in estremo gustoso di questa virtù intende a se stesso, e sa distinguere in occasione anco l'ottimo dal buono, e migliore."

[155] Scannelli 1657, p. 303: "Dove in questa singolar Galeria potranno osservare la diversità dell'operazioni, ed insieme con agio distinguere l'infime dalla buone, e queste ancora dale più perfette."

[156] Scannelli 1657, pp. 11ff.

within it. In a letter to the duke of 1658, Poggi recounted the visit of two Bolognese *virtuosi*: after concluding their discussions on painting, they passed into the main gallery, which rendered one of the visitors, a certain Father Bonaventure, speechless. Unable to find words to express his admiration for the marvellous works before him, he simply declared that it was a "paradise."[157] In Francesco's gallery, the secularization of the altarpiece – as an object of theoretical discourse and aesthetic delectation – was fully realized.

V. The Church's Position

As we have seen in the preceding examples, collectors often had to contend with a genuinely obstructive resistance from local institutions and authorities, and, on a number of occasions, resorted to subterfuge in order to circumvent their adversaries. But what was the perspective of chuch officials regarding the removal of their altarpieces?

The 1630 correspondence of the bishop of Cremona, Pietro Campori, regarding the theft of Parmigianino's *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine* (fig. 118) altarpiece from the church of S. Pietro in Viadana is notable because it both testifies to the prevalence of the practice as well as the participation of ecclesiastics in these transactions (Appendix 1).[158] In a letter to

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[157] Geminiano Poggi to Francesco I d'Este, 3 October 1658: "Quando il p.^{e} vide le maraviglie della pittura nella gran camera di parata venne quasi meno di dolcezza, e come estatico stette un pezzo che non vulle rispondere ad alcuno di quei che lo interrogavano, poi in fine disse questo è un Paradiso ove non può stupor dar luogo alla lingua di parlare e però non si meraviglino loro altri ss.^{ri} della mia taciturnità;" Venturi 1882, p. 256, doc. XII.

[158] There is no documentation of the commission other than Vasari's remarks that when Parmigianino fled Parma to Viadana during the Italian wars, he painted two panels in tempera: one, a *St Francis* for the church of the Frati de' Zoccoli; the other, a *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine* for the church of S. Pietro; Vasari/DeVere 1996, vol. 1, p. 934. Campori's letters of 1630 are the last notice of the altarpiece. Since the 1930s, the Viadana altarpiece has usually been associated with an altarpiece in S. Maria Addolorata at Bardi, which is unanimously attributed to Parmigianino. Although the identification is generally accepted, aside from the subject matter, there is no conclusive evidence that Bardi painting is that from Viadana. Vaccaro 2002, no. 2, pp. 125-28.

Odoardo Farnese, the Duke of Parma, enjoining him to assist in the return of the altarpiece, Campori claims that the altarpiece had been transferred to a location in Parma for safekeeping during the war over the succession of Mantua, but had since been sold to an unknown individual who evidently had no intention of returning it (doc. 2). Campori expresses the expected outrage at the sacrilege of the act: to remove a sacred image from the church is to deprive the faithful of an object of long-standing veneration; to help in its return would be an act of piety (doc. 3). In a letter to the prior of the church, he upbraids his subordinate for failing to advise him of the loss of the altarpiece – an omission that was made all the worse by the fact of his "knowing full well that what once was devoted to divine worship cannot be converted to personal use in secular places" (doc. 1). Campori's remarkable phrasing here is so specific as to suggest that he was certain of the fate of the altarpiece. Indeed, he would have had considerable insight into the matter: from 1607 to 1616 he was the secretary of Cardinal Scipione Borghese, during which time he presumably would have witnessed first-hand Borghese's infamous acquisition of Raphael's *Entombment* altarpiece. He himself had been falsely accused only three years earlier of having not returned a painting from the church of S. Bartolomeo at Cremona, which he had taken to his house to have copied – an action that was evidently already recognized as a suspicious pretense for removing (and substituting) altarpieces. Campori denied the allegation in an outraged letter to the general of the Carmelites as "something so foreign to my profession," noting that he had refused other sacred paintings that had been offered to him in the past.[159]

[159] Bishop Pietro Campori to the Father-General of the Carmelites, 24 June 1627: "Non ha havuto occasione di credere ch io tenessi mano a spogliar chiese delli suoi ornamenti cosa alienissima dalla mia professione et che qui et altrove ho recusato simili pitture che mi sono state gratiosamente offerte;" Campori 1866, doc. CXX. The painting in question is Altobello Meloni's *Walk to Emmaus*,

It is not difficult to understand Campori's position as a victim of what appears to have been outright theft. But where ecclesiastics were involved in the negotiations themselves, their attitudes toward sacred art could be considerably more pragamatic. The prolonged negotiations between the Nasi family and the Augustinians of S. Spirito regarding a copy of Perugino's *Vision of St Bernard* (fig. 119) demonstrate that church officials had become acutely aware of what was at stake in their negotiations with collectors.[160] The altarpiece had been returned to Francesco Nasi in 1635 following a fiercely contested legal dispute for ownership of the painting, which was to be transferred from the family chapel in the Cistercian church at Borgo Pinti when the monks were ordered to relocate to S. Maria degli Angeli in Cestello.[161] Once Nasi took ownership of the altarpiece, it remained in his palazzo at Borgo S. Jacopo, although it is unclear whether the altarpiece was displayed or simply stored. According to his testament of 1640, Nasi wished the altarpiece to be installed in the family chapel in S. Spirito, taking the place of a less esteemed altarpiece by Raffaellino del Garbo. His sister and heir, Ortensia Capponi, saw to the renovations of the chapel; however, when work on the chapel was finished in 1650, she decided to keep Perugino's altarpiece for herself and in 1651 she offered the Augustinians a copy in its place. The monks were

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commissioned by the Carmelites c. 1516-17 and currently in the National Gallery in London, see Gould 1962, no. 753, vol. 1, pp. 90-91.

[160] The dispute regarding the ownership and copy of Perugino's *Vision of St Bernard* is discussed at length in Spinelli 1985.

[161] The altarpiece had been commissioned by the heirs of Bartolommeo Nasi around 1489 for their chapel at S. Maria Maddalena di Cestello. The monks initially left the altarpiece behind at Borgo Pinti; however, when the Carmelite nuns took possession of the church in 1626 under order of Urban VIII, they decided to dedicate the Nasi chapel instead to St. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi and commissioned a new altarpiece from Francesco Curradi to be placed over her relics. It was at this point that Carmelite monks sought to transfer it to their new church; Spinelli 1985, pp. 76-77.

initially reluctant to accept the copy in deference to the terms of Nasi's will. Ortensia renewed her proposal the following year, offering an additional two hundred *scudi* to compensate for Perugino's altarpiece. The Augustinians, who were in dire need of funding due to storm damage recently sustained by the campanile, agreed to accept the copy.

But before agreeing to the amount, the priors had unsuccessfully attempted to extract more money from Ortensia by insisting on having *stima* drawn up, suggesting that financial concerns trumped their apprehensions regarding the suitability of the substitute.[162] Despite their initial misgivings about dishonouring Nasi's will, the monks must have been fully aware that other altarpieces were being sold to collectors; certainly the Medici family had already provided a persuasive local example for collectors on the substitution of church altarpieces with copies. In the internal proceedings regarding the Ortensia's offer, however, the monks of S. Spirito offered their own justification for accepting the copy, one that was consonant with the decrees of the Church. They declare that "with regard to the divine cult and devotion, there is no difference to have the copy rather than the original in the church."[163] The implied corollary is that in other contexts, the difference between the original and its copy *did* matter. Yet it seems unlikely that the monks fully subscribed to this opinion, for their reluctance to accept the copy as well as their efforts to raise the asking price of the

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[162] Cesare Dandini and Filippo Latini valued the altarpiece at 550 and 450 ducats, respectively, and the copy at 60 and 80 *scudi*. However, the Capponi family believed the new *stime* to be excessive, and the affair remained unresolved until October 1654 when the grand duke, responding to the request of the Augustinians, called for a new *stima* to be undertaken by court-appointed painters. Felice Ficherelli and Orazio Fidani upheld the original estmate of two hundred *scudi*; Spinelli 1985, pp. 78-79.

[163] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Conv. Sopp. 122, filza 149, "Scritture Decreti e Ordini Diversi 1623-1770," 16 December 1653: "Quanto al Culto divino, e devozione, non può essere differenze nell'havere nella Chiesa piu tosto la Copia, che l'originale;" quoted in Spinelli 1985, p. 78.

original was far more in keeping with the real way patrons (and ecclesiastics) discriminated between rare and highly valuable altarpieces and their much less prestigious substitutes.[164]

Similar distinctions between originals and copies were made in the documents concerning the 1713 dispute between Pierre Legros and the Jesuit officials of S. Andrea al Quiranale concerning the sculptor's proposal to make a copy of his own statue of *Stanislas Kostka*, which had been installed ten years earlier in the novitiate house in the room where Kostka had died.[165] The conflict did not concern the sale of the statue, but rather Legros's proposal to move it from the exclusive cult room – where the recumbent polychrome figure was intimately situated with remarkably lifelike effect – to Kostka's reliquary chapel in main church and replace it with a plaster copy. In their response to Legros, the Jesuits reject the proposal foremost on the grounds that the piety aroused by both the original and its copy would be diminished: the original, because its verisimilitude, which was considered instrumental to its devotional efficacy, would be detrimentally affected by its new setting;[166]

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[164] I am grateful to Evonne Levy for drawing my attention to her excellent analysis of the dispute with regard to Benjamin's distinction between cult value and exhibition value; Levy 1997.. The arguments of Legros and the Jesuits are preserved in four related documents. The earliest document, which was published by Levy, is dated February 1713. It reports the meeting at which Legros first proposed moving his statue and thus establishes and approximate date for the subsequent documents; see Levy 1997. Three undated documents, which were first published by Francis Haskell in 1955 record the Jesuits' rejection of the proposal; Legros's rebuttal; and the Jesuits' final refusal of the project; see Haskell 1955; trans. Enggass and Brown 1970, pp. 59-68.

[165] Discussions regarding the church's decoration were likely prompted by the renewed attention directed to the Kostka's cult under Clement XI. Kostka (1550-1568) had been beatified in 1605, and in May 1713, the Vatican decided to proceed with his canonization. In November 1713, the pope visited S. Andrea on the occasion of his approval of Kostka's miracles. Levy 1997, pp. 90-91.

[166] "Onde con lo scemare la devozione, scemerà anche l'estimazione del lavoro, da godersi più da vicino che da lontano;" quoted in Haskell 1955, p. 288, In addition, the Jesuits list other several other aethetic objections to the proposal: the dimensions of the statue would be ill-suited to the shallow, vertical profile of the chapel space; the plaster copy would be less durable; the church lighting would be ill-suited to its contours; and that the chapel would upset the intended uniformity of Bernini's

the copy, because it would be regarded as an inferior version of the nearby original.[167] The Jesuits wanted to preserve the unique, cultic ambience of Kostka's chapel in the novitiate and knew that viewers placed a higher value on original works than copies – as they did themselves. They also claim that the church was an inferior setting for the prized statue, where it would "inspire as little piety as the statues of the saints do on the altars where their bodies lie," a surprisingly pessimistic statement about devotional attitudes toward religious statuary that was perhaps intended to dissuade Legros by downplaying the allure of the public chapel.[168] In Legros's rebuttal, the sculptor shrewdly adopts the position of religious authority, and dismisses their concerns regarding the diminished prestige of the copy on the grounds that in venerating a holy image it should make no difference whether it is an original or copy.[169] He adds that the replication of holy images has always been used to increase the veneration of Gods and the saints.[170] Legros is perfectly correct from a theological point of view; but he almost certainly had self-promotion in mind when he proposed a more prominent and accessible location, for it would suffice his argument were the copy to be installed in the main church.

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interior.

[167] "E perchè poco concorso e meno divozione avrà la copia, stando esposto nella publica chiesa l'originale;" quoted in Haskell 1955, p. 288.

[168] "In chiesa metterà poco devozione, come poca ne mettono le statue dei Santi su gl'altari dove sono I loro copri riposte;" quoted in Haskell 1955, p. 288; translated in Enggass and Brown 1970, p. 63.

[169] "Non si riflette se siano originale o copie d'un artifice per venerarle;" quoted in Haskell 1955, p. 291.

[170] "Niuno dirà mai che moltiplicate le imagine del Crocifisso della Vergine e dei Santi in tante e tante chiese, si scemi la divozione, mentre questa si acresce nel culto prestato a Dio e ai Santi nelle loro imagini molteplicate;" quoted in Haskell 1955, p. 288.

As Evonne Levy stresses, the debates between Legros and the Jesuits reveal that aesthetic challenges to the cult value of religious art in early modern Italy could also come from within the church itself, which is "usually assumed to be a stable ritual site for art."[171] However, the official position of the post-Tridentine Church was clear: only the liturgical function of the altarpiece mattered, in which case there could be no substantive difference between the original and its substitute. Further, to even make any such distinction would be to wrongly place value on the creator of the painting, rather than the image itself. Although the decrees on images issued by the Council of Trent had amounted to little more than a ratification of traditional defences of religious images, they had paved the way for the spoliation of churches in the following centuries. With subject matter and decorum officially proclaimed as the sole concerns for ecclesiastical authorities, subsequent generations of collectors were armed with an unimpeachable rationale for the removal of church images. Although contemporary commentators continued to decry the practice, there was little they could do to stop it.

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In Marco Boschini's chronicle of Venetian painting, *La carta del navegar pittoresco* (Venice, 1660), the author makes specific reference to the removal of altarpieces in his lament of the depletion of Venice's artistic patrimony, which introduces the monumental poem: "…the sea brought [the foreigners] also to the churches / to take away the altar paintings / bewitching the people with their money."[172] Here, Boschini indicates that by the mid-seventeenth

[171] Levy 1997, p. 103,

[172] Boschini 1966, p.23: "Ma el ponto xe ch'i intrava anche in Sagrà, / Per portar via le Pala dei Altari, / Incantando la zente con danari."

century the extraction of altarpieces from churches was underway in Venice and that these altarpieces were going to foreign – rather than local – collectors. Boschini notably characterizes the Venetians as willing accomplices, unable to resist the temptation of money. One gets a sense of the amounts that changed hands from Boschini's later comment from the *Ricche Minere* (Venice, 1674) that painting is superior in value to gold, noting that Tintoretto's paintings of the *Last Judgment* and the *Worship of the Golden Calf* housed in the presbytery of the Madonna dell'Orto, which were commissioned for only fifty ducats each, would surely fetch fifty thousand ducats if they were to be put up for sale.[173] Boschini is surely exaggerating, but there may be some basis for his claims. In 1648 Carlo Ridolfi reported that the gallery of Charles I, who counted among Europe's most ambitious collectors, housed many paintings by Tintoretto, including, most notably, *Christ Washing the Feet of His Apostles* (fig. 120), a massive canvas that had been removed from the chancel of S. Marcuola at Venice.[174]

By the latter half of the seventeenth century, the (ac)cumulative efforts of elite collectors had coalesced into a normalization of the practice, and attitudes toward the inviolability of altarpieces softened accordingly, at least for many of those involved in the business of buying and selling them. Political persuasion was less likely to be a necessary lubricant for these transactions as the sale of altarpieces had become more akin to business negotiations, in which almost any work could be had for the right price. Younger generations were not averse to parting with their familial altarpiece, especially if they were under

[173] Boschini 1674, fol. [d12] verso - e1 recto; cf. Pomian 1990, p.109.

[174] Ridolfi 1648, vol. 2, p. 42.

financial duress or if they simply wanted to update their chapels according to current fashions. And business-minded ecclesiastics were not unaware of the value of the famed works in their possession, the sale of which could generate considerable income that could be put toward maintenance or even costly renovations.

Indeed, the extent to which the practices surrounding the sale of altarpieces had become normalized is suggested by the documents concerning the sale of the predella in 1663 and main panel in 1678 of Raphael's altarpiece of the *Madonna Enthroned with Saints* by the nuns of S. Antonio at Perugia (Appendix 2; fig. 121).[175] According to the *supplica* for the sale of the predella submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars – a legislative body within the curia and *de facto* authority ecclesiastical property – the convent had run up a debt of five hundred *scudi* to the butcher and other food merchants and had determined that the least damaging and most expeditious way to settle their finances would be to sell off the "five devotional paintings … which are neither necessary nor used as altarpieces" (doc. 1). Significantly, they had no intention of parting with the main panel. Like collectors such as Scipione Borghese, it seems they considered the predella to be dispensable; however, their reasons differ. In the nuns' supplica, the panels are described as a "pleasing decoration," but not essential for worship (doc. 2). But given the rarity of works by Raphael, even a minor work such as the predella would surely attract buyers. In the license granted for the its sale, the buyer is already identified as Queen Christina of Sweden, who had agreed to pay six hundred *scudi* for the five panels, and a further thirty *scudi* to a local painter to create substitute copies (doc. 3). The subsequent deed of sale provides a highly detailed description

[175] The altarpiece was commissioned by the nuns in 1504 for their space in the convent. For the commission and provenance of the altarpiece, see Wolk Simon and Dabell 2006.

of the iconography of the entire altarpieces as well as a lengthy account of the nuns' decision to sell the predella (doc. 4). The notary curiously stresses that the altarpiece was renowned for its piety, not its artifice – a claim that by its very assertion would suggest the opposite to be true. Similarly, its future owner, Queen Christina, is described as "more deserving of greater things than anyone else on account of her outstanding greatness, combined with splendid and notable piety."

However, it is unlikely that the Swedish queen had pious intentions for the predella paintings. Christina had famously abdicated in 1654, in order to convert to Catholicism and move to Rome. As a Protestant monarch, her conversion was a *cause celebre* in papal Rome.[176] Her arrival in the city on 23 December 1655 was celebrated with an elaborate entry and other festivities, and she received the sacrament from Pope Alexander VII on Christmas day. All of this surely would have recommended her to the nuns as an ideal buyer for the altarpiece. However, in Roman circles, Christina, who was otherwise indifferent to the observances of Catholic faith, was better known for intellectual pursuits and her unconventional manner and dress. Once settled into the Palazzo Farnese, she played host to intellectuals and artists at her academy and amassed one of the largest collections of the day.[177] Christina had arrived in Rome with a small nucleus of paintings by Italian masters

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[176] For a useful synopsis of various explanations of Christina's abdication and conversion to Catholicism, see Åkerman 1991, pp. 3-13.

[177] Much has been written about Christina's intellectual pursuits, patronage, and collecting. For her art collecting, in particular, see Nordenfalk 1966; Montanori 2002; *Cristina di Svezia* 2003. Her collection in Rome is documented in her post-mortem inventory of 1689, which was drawn up by the notary, Lorenzo Belli, and is transcribed in Campori 1975, no. XXVIII, pp. 336-76. The collection was bequeathed to Christina's friend and advisor, Cardinal Decio Azzolino, who died only a few weeks after the queen. Azzolino's nephew, Pompeo, sold the collection to Livio Odescalchi in 1692 for 123,000 *scudi*. There is a detailed inventory of the paintings in Odescalchi's collection compiled

selected from her sizeable collection in Stockholm, mostly comprised of paintings from the famous Kunst- and Wunderkammer of Rudolf II, which had been seized by Swedish troops following the surrender of Prague in July 1648 at the end of the Thirty Years War.[178] Christina, who had already developed a keen preference for the sixteenth-century Italian schools, was decidedly unimpressed with its holdings. In a 1652 letter to her frequent correspondent, Paolo Giodano II Orsini, the Duke of Bracciano, describes her disappointment with the collection. She writes of her gallery:

> There is an infinite range of items, but apart from some thirty or forty Italian originals, I discount them all. There are works by Albrecht Dürer and other German masters whose names I do not know but who would arouse the profound admiration of anyone apart from myself. But I do declare that I would exchange them all for two Raphaels, and I think that even this would be doing them too much honour.[179]

The queen's single-minded admiration for Raphael only intensified upon her arrival in Rome. Once installed in the Palazzo Riario, where she lived from 1658, she devised plans for a gallery devoted entirely to Raphael. The gallery was likely a caprice, but Christina did succeed in acquiring four more paintings by the artist: the *Madonna del Passeggio* (more likely to have been painted by Gianfrancesco Penni), and three unidentified portraits. (Christina also attempted to buy Raphael's altarpiece from the nuns of Foligno. The mother

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in 1703 ("Nota de quadri della Christina di Svezia"). After the death of Odescalchi in 1713, Christina's collections were dispersed among European collectors. For the documenary history of Christina's collection, see Danesi Squarzina 2003.

[178] When Prague was captured, the commanding officer had a brief inventory hastily drawn up, which lists 764 paintings, although no artists or dimensions are indicated. Nordenfalk 1966, p. 424..

[179] Christina, Queen of Sweden to Paolo Giordano II Orsini, 22 May 1652: "Ella è veramente grande e bella. Vi è un numero infinito di pezzi, ma fuori di trenta o quaranta che sono originali italiani, io non so conto alcuno degl'altri. Ve ne sono di Alberto Duro et d'altri maestri alemanni che io non so il nome, quali ogn'altro che me stimerebbe molto, ma io vi giuro che li darei tutti per un paro di quadri di Raffaello e credo di farli anche troppo honore;" quoted in Bildt 1906, p. 26.

superior's response – that had the nuns accepted similar offers in the past, they would not have enjoyed the enviable good fortune of the queen's visit – is a diplomatic *tour de force*).[180] In this context, Christina's acquisition of Raphael's predella can only be understood in terms of her connoisseurial pursuits. It is worth nothing that Alexander VII, who had intimate knowledge of Christina's activities in Rome, reprimanded the nuns of S. Antonio for their actions.[181]

In early 1677 the nuns once again found themselves in financial straits, and petitioned the Congregation for permission sell the main panel (doc. 4). Events this time proceeded in a different sequence. No buyer is identified at the outset, but rather the nuns initiated the sale by requesting that *stima* be drawn up by painters so that the altarpiece would be ready "when a buyer is found." A license was granted by the Congregation to sell the panel for 1800 *scudi* (doc. 5), and early the following year, Count Giovan'Antonio Bigazzini, a native of Perugia residing in Rome, agreed to pay the nuns two thousand *scudi* in cash, liens, and provisions (doc. 7) and provide a copy of the altarpiece within three months. Like the earlier deed of sale, the subject of the altarpiece is described in detail; however, nothing is said with regard to the circumstances of its sale nor is there any reference to its devotional function. The transaction is rather recorded as a matter-of-fact transfer of property.

And with the sale of altarpieces codified as a simple financial transaction, the besieged nuns of Foligno finally had at their disposal a highly effective method to dissuade

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[180] "Se ad altri sumiglianti profferte avessero in addietro aderito le religiose, non avremmo ora noi l'invidiabil fortuna di godere della presenza di Vostra Maesta;" quoted in Faloci Pulignani 1890, p. 156. For Christina's efforts to buy the altarpiece, see Nucciarelli and Severini 2007, pp. 24-25.

[181] Nordenfalk 1966, doc. 1046.

prospective buyers. In 1682, Cosimo III de' Medici expressed his interest in the painting, though he had already been counselled by his uncle, the renowned expert, Cardinal Leopoldo that the painting was not of Raphael's "best manner" (a profoundly different opinion from the advisors of Francesco I d'Este).[182] The nuns responded with an asking price at twelve thousand *scudi*, to which Cosimo's secretary incredulously remarked: "The nuns of Foligno either do not need to sell their Raphael or do not want to, because it is inconceivable that anyone should come forward as purchaser at that price, unless it were the King of France."[183]

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The story of the progressive aestheticization of altarpieces that was underway by the end of the fifteenth century with the dispute surrounding Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* culminates with Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici. As the seventeenth century drew to a close, the Medici dynasty was in irrevocable decline, crippled by decades of profligate spending and ineffectual leadership. Even so, as the longstanding heir of Cosimo III, who reigned Tuscany for more than half a century, Ferdinando could indulge in extravagant pursuits. The prince enjoyed a reputation as an engaged and knowledgeable patron of music and the arts. Aided by as his agent, the Genoese artist, Niccolò Cassana, upon maturity Ferdinando set about building the collections in his apartments at the Palazzo Pitti and the Medici Villa at Poggio a

[182] Apollonio Bassetti to Abbot Giovanni Battista Mancini, 24 November 1682: "In proposito del Quadro di Raffaello, S.A. ha visto e considerato il tutto, nè recusa di dare orecchio alla aperture, che venissero fatte per la vendita, ma suppone che la monache, se vogliono veramente farne danaro, abbiano a mettersi ad un segno, che non ispaventi; se ben gli pare d'aver sentito dire al Sig. Cardinale Leopoldo, che l'opera non sia veramente della miglior maniera dell'Autore, come dimostra in effectto la disposizione delle figure;" Lankheit 1962, doc. 194.

[183] Bassetti to Mancini, 15 December 1682: "Le monache di Foligno o non hanno bisogno di vendere il loro Raffaello, o non ne hanno voglia, perché fuori del Re di Francia, non si vede chi potesse esserne il compratore a quel prezzo;" quoted in Goldberg 1983, p. 179.

Caiano.[184] But it is his ruthless of acquisition of altarpieces from Florentine churches that arguably has done the most to secure his reputation as an art collector.

Ferdinando's first acquisition resulted from modest circumstances. Following the death of Carlo Dolci in 1686, Ferdinando enlisted his pupil, Onorio Marinari, to finish Dolci's altarpiece of the *Vision of St Louis of Toulouse* (fig. 122), which had been commissioned in 1675 by Canon Francesco Bocchineri for his chapel in the church of S. Francesco at Prato and abandoned when the elderly canon died before its completion.[185] Dolci's altarpiece – a dynamic composition of the Virgin appearing as a celestial vision above a fictive altar – must have whet his appetite for the genre. Ferdinando proceeded cautiously. With his uncle, Cardinal Francesco Maria de' Medici acting as his intermediary in Rome, in early 1689 he next set out to purchase Fra Bartolommeo's *St Mark* (fig. 50) from the choir of S. Marco – the former pendant of the *St Sebastian* that had been acquired by Francis I in 1532. Cardinal Francesco's correspondence with his agents chronicles the bureaucratic obstacles facing collectors (as well as providing an unintended lesson on how not to proceed) from uncooperative parties, in this case, the general of the Dominicans (Appendix 3). Given that the painting was not, strictly speaking, an altarpiece, its removal was not expected to elicit any resistance. The cardinal makes this distinction in a letter expressing his shock at the rejection of the offer: "it is not an altarpiece, but simply a painting" (doc. 1). The cardinal was also aware that the pendant painting of *St Sebastian* had

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[184] For Grand Prince Ferdinando's activities as an art collector, see Haskell 1980, pp. 228-41; Strocchi 1982; Fogolari 1987; Chiarini 1989. For the post-mortem inventory of his collections at the Palazzo Pitti, see Chiarini 1975; for Poggio a Caiano, see Strocchi, 1975/76.

[185] Baldassarri 1995, no. 147-48, pp. 173-75.

been sold without the need for any such negotiation and that there were more valuable altarpieces by the Frate still in the church (doc. 3). He enlisted the help of Alessandro Sozzini, a Medici agent in Rome, who directed him instead to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (doc. 2). But despite the active support of the Florentine secretary of the Congregation, Monsignor Bandino Panciatichi, the prince and the cardinal, both very much novices in the process of extracting art from churches, had misjudged their approach. The Congregation only had the power to issue advisory rulings to the pope, who had the final say in the matter: the pope in question was Innocent XI, who was renowned for his austerity and efforts to reform abuse and corruption within the curia. According to Sozzini's report, the cardinal's application to remove the altarpiece was rejected by the Congregation because its content, which reflected the worldly interests of the prince, was "repulsive" to the Congregation, and more grievously, to the pope (doc. 7) – this, despite the fact that Sozzini and Panciatichi had both urged the cardinal to conceal Ferdinando's identity (docs. 5 and 6). Ferdinando would finally acquire the *St Mark* in early 1692, and the experience gained in navigating the curial bureaucracy surely proved invaluable to the prince and his agents.

Over the next dozen years, Ferdinando acquired altarpieces in quick succession using a policy of generous financial compensation and, one assumes, more tactful negotiation. These include: Fra Bartolommeo's *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine* altarpiece, also from S. Marco (fig. 123), and the *Pala della Signoria* (fig. 35) from S. Lorenzo in Florence; Cigoli's *Deposition* from S. Stefano in Empoli (fig. 124); Rosso's *Dei* altarpiece (fig. 125) from S. Spirito in Florence; Francesco Bassano's *Martyrdom of St Catherine* from S. Giovannino degli Scolopi in Florence (fig. 126); Guercino's *Martyrdom of*

St Bartholomew from S. Martino at Siena (fig. 127); Orazio Riminaldi's *Martyrdom of St Cecilia* from S. Caterina in Pisa (fig. 128) and *Moses Raising the Brazen Serpent* from the Pisa Duomo (fig. 129); Annibale Carracci's *Christ in Glory with Saints* from the hermitage at Camaldoli (fig. 130); Raphael's *Madonna del Baldacchino* from the Duomo at Pescia (fig. 34); Carlo Maratta's *Madonna Appearing before S. Filippo Neri* from S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini in Rome (fig. 131); Parmigianino's *Madonna of the Long Neck* from S. Maria dei Servi in Parma (fig. 132); Giovanni Lanfranco's *Ecstasy of St Margaret* from S. Maria Nuova in Cortona (fig. 133); and Sarto's *Madonna of the Harpies* from S. Francesco dei Macci in Florence (fig. 134).[186]

With Ferdinando, there was a no distinction between traditional and narrative altarpiece formats. The symmetrical *sacre conversazioni* of the early-sixteenth century (the *Pala della Signoria*, the *Madonna del Baldacchino*, the *Dei* altarpiece) were evidently just as desirable as the dramatic scenes of saints' lives from the seventeenth century (the *Martyrdom of St Cecilia*, the *Ecstasy of St Margaret*, the *Martyrdom of St Bartholomew*). Likewise, he collected altarpieces by Florentine and non-Florentine artists in equal measure (although he did uphold the Vasarian bias against the fifteenth century and earlier and similarly sidestepped the mid-sixteenth century altogether). Ferdinando's acquisition of altarpieces was driven by his self-professed appetite for old masters. In a letter to Cardinal Gaspare Carpegna seeking his intervention in the sale of Sarto's *Madonna of the Harpies* – in exchange for which he offered to refurbish the entire church – Ferdinando spoke rapturously of his need to collect art. He writes: "I find myself so taken by an intense love of the noble

[186] For these acquisitions, see Strocchi 1982, pp. 44-47.

Art of Painting – enamoured above all with the beautiful works of the most celebrated masters – which I continually pursue to enrich my apartments, and which give my eyes that welcome pleasure to which they have become accustomed."[187] With Ferdinando, there was no longer any question of the suitability of altarpieces in a secular setting, nor any misgivings about the impropriety of removing them. The uproar over the removal of Raphael's *Madonna del Baldacchino* had more to do with the fact that Ferdinando bought the altarpiece directly from the Buonvicino family – to whom he paid the considerable sum of 10 000 *scudi* – thereby circumventing church officials to whom he offered no recompense.[188] In an anonymous notice from a Tuscan manuscript gazette, the writer condemns the impiety of removing a privileged altar (thus condemning souls in purgatory to hell!), but his attack is directed not at Ferdinando but at the greed of the Turini family, along with a certain Benedetto Falconcini, who had facilitated the sale of the altarpiece. It is equally telling that, according to the writer, Falconini's actions would have been praiseworthy had he only directed the prince's money toward the needs of the church instead.[189] Nevertheless, the

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[187] Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici to Cardinal Gaspare Carpegna, 12 May 1703: "Mi trovo talmente preso da un vivo Amore alla nobil' Art della Pittura, che invaghito oltremodo delle belle Opere de' Professori più celebri ne vò in traccia bene spesso per arricchirne le mie Stanza, e dando all'occhio questa gradita compiacenza assuefarlo;" quoted in Strocchi 1982, p. 46.

[188] For the protests against the removal of the *Madonna del Baldacchino*, see Lightbown 1963a; *Raffaello a Firenze* 1984, no. 10, pp. 119-28. Similarly, resistance to Ferdinando's acquisition of Parmigianino's *Madonna of the Long Neck* arose from a competing claim from Count Silvio Cerati regarding property rights of the Neresi chapel; Robiony 1904.

[189] "Poiche se [Falconcini] fosse stato come dovea essere, dovea appresso il Principe operare a favore della [tavola]: che n'avrebbe ritratto grand'utile quando navesse rappresentato il valore dell'istessa, e l'estremi bisogni in cui la povera Chiesa si ritrova massima se ciò havesse fatto, come in coscienza dovea, non havrebbe operato a favore dell'interessata sua ambitione; e … se la Casa Turini che per arrivare ai loro perfidi fini hanno venduto Christo, la Madre Angeli e Santi e quello che è più orrendo e detestabile un altar privilegiato per la di cui mancanza tante anime purganti si ritrovano alle fiamme che sarebbero a godere leterni riposi per il che si sono costoro resi così odiosi et abominevoli non solo

eighteenth-century biographer, Giovanni Lami, felt compelled to defend Ferdinando from charges of sacrilege:

> He had a burning love and desire to collect all remarkable paintings and as many choice works of art as lay in his power and to adorn his royal palaces and villas with them … so great was his desire of obtaining paintings that he took valuable pictures from churches, not from profane contempt, but with the laudable design of conserving miraculous works of art, and of seizing a convenient opportunity for repairing, enlarging, and adorning those churches, most of which were unsightly and neglected, at great expense, so compensating a light loss with a rich interest of honour and service to God.[190]

Lami does not justify the prince's acquisition of altarpieces with assertions of his piety, but rather presents a strikingly modern sensibility, describing a mutually beneficial arrangement whereby works of art are conserved in the care of collectors while churches could be repaired and renovated with the proceeds of their sale. To be sure, the extent of Ferdinando's acquisitions was singular by the standards of the day. Yet his legacy confirms that the Renaissance altarpiece had become the province of the art collector.

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a questi Popoli ma etiam Dio;" quoted in Gualandi 1843.

[190] Lami 1742, p. 100: "Hinc ardens ille amor ac desiderium tabulas omnes insignes, & potiores artificum labores atque opera, quaecumque posset, colligendi; iisque aedes suas regificas, & praetoria, ac villas instruendi…. Quin & eo processit huiusmodi picturas obtinendi cupiditas, ut e templis ipsis tabulas admirandas extraxerit, non profano ausu, sed consilio laudabili, & quo mirisicorum operum conservationi diligenti consuleret; templaque illa indecora, ut plurimum, ac neglecta, mango sumtu restaurandi, ampliandi, exornandi opportunam occasionem adriperet, & iacturam facilem ingenti divini cultus & honoris soenore compensaret;" translated in Lightbown 1963a, p. 102.

Epilogue. The Dawn of the Museum Age

In the final decades of the French *ancien régime*, members of the Royal Academy urged the ministers of Louis XV to establish a museum in order to display and preserve the king's art treasures, which were otherwise languishing in his various residences.[823] In 1750, just over one hundred paintings were installed in a makeshift gallery in the vacant first floor of the Luxembourg Palace. Guided by an accompanying catalogue, cultivated visitors could compare and evaluate the paintings according to their pictorial qualities as prescribed in texts such as Roger de Piles's *Cours de peinture par principes avec un balance de peintres* (Paris, 1708), which includes the "Balance de peintres," a numerical rating scale devised as an objective method to assist connoisseurs in their judgment.[824] When the Luxembourg Gallery was finally closed in 1779 to accommodate the residence of the younger brother of Louis XVI, more ambitious plans were already underway to create a "grand and magnificent" museum to be permanently located in the Grand Gallery of the Louvre.[825] The physical transformation of this 400-metre-long corridor into a modern public museum, however, posed considerable practical challenges to the Comte d'Angiviller, Director

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[823] The evolution of the Louvre was extensively documented by the bureaucrats of the *ancien régime*, and later, the French Republic. Andrew McClellan's monograph offers a comprehensive overview of the early development of the Louvre; McClellan 1994. For the documentation, see also Cantarel-Besson 1981; Pommier 1991.

[824] In the "Balance de peintres," which concludes the *Cours de peinture* (pp. 489-[498]), De Piles rates 56 of the best known sixteenth- and seventeenth-century painters according to composition, drawing, colour, and expression, allotting 0 to 20 points for each criterion. Raphael and Rubens top the list, both receiving a total score of 65 points.

[825] Reboul, pp. 190-91: "On parle d'un grand et magnifique projet, qui formera le plus beau temple des arts qui ait jamais été. On dit que … la précieuse collection des tableaux du Roi seront placés de suite dans l'immense galerie du Louvre."

General of the *Bâtiments du roi*. In particular, his decade-long indecision over how to light the gallery meant that little progress had been made when the tumultuous events of 1789 effectively put an end to the king's plans for the Louvre.[826]

When Louis XIV was finally deposed on 10 August 1792, the Louvre came under immediate control of the state. Completion of the project was a matter of urgency for the National Convention, who believed that success in finally opening the museum could help sway public opinion in their favour within France and abroad. D'Angiviller's ambitious plans were abandoned in favour of more expeditious renovations, and the Louvre opened its doors to the public exactly one year later as part of the festivities commemorating the anniversary of the birth of the Republic. It was not until January 1794, when the Louvre came under the direction of the predominantly Jacobin Conservatoire led by Jacques-Louis David, however, that the Luxembourg's connoisseurial programme and accompanying *objets de luxe* were abandoned in favour of a rational, historical approach that would serve to educate French artists and citizens in the history of art. In Casimir Varon's May 1794 report on the Conservatoire's plans for the Louvre, now referred to as the "Muséum National des Arts," the Grand Gallery is envisaged as "a continuous and uninterrupted sequence revealing the progress of the arts and the degrees of perfection attained by the various nations that have cultivated them."[827] Its realization would stand as a monument to Republican progress and enlightenment. Significantly, the Conservatoire also recognized that a chronological arrangement would also help to mitigate the problematic content of

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[826] For the debates about lighting and the successive proposals considered by d'Angiviller, see Connelly 1972; and, McClellan 1994, ch. 2, "D'Angiviller's Louvre Project."

[827] Varon 1794, p. 15: "Que la galerie offre une suite non interrompue des progrès de l'art et des degrés de perfection où les ont portés tous les peuples qui les ont successivement cultivés."

those paintings "bearing the marks of superstition, flattery, and debauchery," in other words, religious images, portraits of the aristocracy, and decadent mythologies and genre scenes. The overall effect of the collection, Varon argues, would "veil these faults" by subsuming its constituent works within a rigorous and methodical history of art.[828]

Indeed, the matter of religious art was a pressing issue for the new Republic. In November 1789, all property rights of the French Church were transferred to the state; when the suppression of the French monasteries began in 1790, the *Commission des monuments* was established to deal with the confiscation of Church property. Despite the Revolutionaries' antipathy toward the old regime, they nevertheless recognized that the preservation of its cultural artefacts was necessary if the Republic was to be seen as a progressive and responsible government. As the priest-turned-revolutionary, Abbé Henri Grégoire declared in his 1794 report to the Convention on the outbreaks of vandalism during the Terror, "barbarians … destroy artistic monuments; free men love and preserve them."[829] Reappropriation, however, was also a revolutionary strategy, a means of subjugating the past by recontextualizing its material capital within the new political order. Paintings that the Conservatoire deemed to be of art historical significance were thus absorbed into the collections of the Louvre, with other religious artefacts distributed amongst newly established provincial museums that were set up in abandoned churches and

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[828] Varon 1794, pp.10-11: "De quelque côté qu'on tourne la vue toutes ses productions sont marquées au coin de la superstition, de la flatterie, du libertinage: il ne retrace point au peuple régénéré les fières leçons qu'il aime il n'est rien pour la liberté … Mais du moins est-il quelque adresse à voiler ses fautes, quelque moyen détourné de lui arracher ses préceptes. Voilà notre tâche, et nous essaierons de la remplir. C'est à l'ensemble qu il convient particulièrement d'opérer ce prodige."

[829] Gregoire 1794: "Les barbares et les esclaves détestent les sciences, et détruisent les monuments des arts; les homes libres les aiment et les conservent."

monasteries.

These policies of appropriation took on another dimension, however, after the French victory over the Coalition Army at Fleurus on 26 June 1794, at which time the Committee of Public Safety, following the recommendation of the Committee of Public Instruction, authorized the confiscation of "monuments of interest to the arts and sciences" from defeated countries.[830] As Napoleon Bonaparte's troops cut a swath through Italy in1796 and 1797, Conservatoire-appointed commissioners – equipped with desiderata to fill the art historical gaps in the Louvre's collections – followed in their wake to select works to be sent back to France. Under the terms of armistice, Parma, Piacenza, Milan, Cremona, Modena, Bologna, Cento, Verona, Mantua, Perugia, Rome, and Venice all agreed to the surrender of precious artefacts, including antique sculptures and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings. (Paintings by the Italian "primitives" were not targeted until 1811, when Dominique Vivant-Denon, who had been personally appointed Director General of the Imperial Museums by Bonaparte in 1802, led a peacetime mission to Italy to bring back art from monasteries suppressed the previous year). Republican officials justified official spoliation by declaring the Louvre to be the rightful and enlightened custodian of Europe's cultural patrimony. Upon the arrival of the first convoy of works from Belgium in September 1794, the painter Jacques-Luc Barbier proclaimed before the Convention that the "immortal works of Rubens, Van Dyck and the other founders of the Flemish school are no longer in a foreign land … they are today delivered to the home of the arts and of genius, the land of liberty and equality, the French Republic."[831] Leaving

[830] Gould 1965, ch. 2, "The Belgian Campaign of 1794."

[831] "Les ouvrages immortels que nos ont laissés les pinceaux de Rubens, de Van Dyck et des autres fondateurs de l'école flamande ne sont plus dans une terre étrangère. Réunies avec soin par les orders

aside such dubious rationalizations, the commissioners put forth more practical justifications: at the Louvre, paintings would be rescued from long-term neglect and brought together for a wide audience who could view them under ideal conditions. Museum officials took great pains to safeguard the works in their possession, meticulously documenting their condition and undertaking scientifically ambitious restorations in order to prepare them for display in the Louvre.[832] The restoration of Raphael's *Madonna of Foligno*, which had at last been wrested from the nuns at S. Anna, was singled out in an exhaustive report intended to demonstrate the necessity and success of France's intervention.[833] In this light, France was cast as the saviour – not despoiler – of Europe's artistic treasures.

But not all were convinced. A 1794 article on Flemish art from the *Décade Philosophique*, which focuses on Rubens's recently arrived *Descent from the Cross*, questioned whether "[the painting] has lost more by being removed than we have gained?"[834] The anonymous author was, above all, sceptical of the aesthetic and moral

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des représentants du people, ils sont aujourd'hui déposés dans la patrie des arts et du génie, dans la patrie de la liberté, et de l'égalité sainte, dans la République française;" quoted in Pommier 1991, p. 229.

[832] Cf. Hoeniger 2011, pp. 193ff.

[833] The "Rapport à l'Institut national sur la restauration du tableau de Raphael connu sous le nom de *La Vierge de Foligno*" was first published in the *Mémoires de l'Institut National des sciences et arts. Littérature et beaux-arts* 5 (an 12 [1804]): 444-56. For a discussion of the circumstances surrounding the restoration and subsequent report, see McClellan 1995; Hoeniger 2011, pp. 195-209.

[834] *La Décade Philosophique*, 20 brumaire an III (10 November 1974), pp. 278-88: "La Descente de croix et les deux autres grands tableaux peints sur bois, qui nos sont arrivés de Belgique avec des frais énormes, n'ont-ils par plus perdu à leur déplacement que nous n'y avons gagné? Tous ces hideux crucifiements peuvent-ils être supportables aux regards, ailleurs que dans les lieux où ils portent à l'âme des sentiments et des souvenirs religieux? Les tortures, dont la mythologie catholique étale si fréquemment le spectacle, doivent-elles être offertes à un peuple délivré des superstitions du catholicisme? Doivent-elles lui être apportées à tant de frais et de si loin? Ces représentations

value that such "grisly," religious images could provide to a secular Republic. Yet he also recognized that Rubens's monumental triptych was meant to be seen from "magically far off" by devout viewers and was thus far better suited to its original setting in Antwerp Cathedral than the galleries of the Louvre. Such a subtle and sympathetic criticism of spoliation evidently had little impact. But while the confiscations of the Low Countries had been carried out with few objections, the plunder of Italy – at that time the overwhelming centrepiece of the Grand Tour – aroused widespread criticism in which the denunciation of spoliation was inextricably connected to broader condemnations of the Republic's expansionist ambitions. Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, the most outspoken opponent of the Napoleonic confiscations of Italy, denounced them in a series of seven letters composed in the summer of 1796 and published together soon thereafter as the *Lettres sur le déplacement des monuments de l'art de l'Italie*.[835] The letters appeared in the midst of the fierce debates about the confiscations that took place in Paris's newspapers and journals, culminating in the submission of two opposing petitions on 15 and 16 August 1796 to the Director of the Louvre, signed by a total of 87 French artists (50 against the

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colossales, destinées à être vues dans un lointain magique, pourront-elles être replacées chez nous à ce point de vue nécessaire pour admirer leurs proportions et leurs formes exagérées, pour atténuer leurs défauts et faire sentire leurs beautés? Enfin, ces trois tableaux et ceux du même genre que l'on y pourra prendre encore, ne perdent-ils pas trop de leur prix en quittant les temples consacrés à l'être souffrant qu'ils représentent, et la nation crédule pour qui cet être est encore un dieu?" Quoted in Pommier 1991, pp. 238-39. The article concerns the French translation of Johann Georg Förster's *Ansichten von Niederrhein, von Brabant, Flandern, Holland, England und Frankreich* (Berlin, 1790-94).

[835] Quatremère de Quincy 1989; Quatremère de Quincy 2012. The book is more commonly, but misleadingly, known as the"Lettres à Miranda," in reference to Quatremère's assumed correspondent, the exiled general, Francisco de Miranda, who had been banished due to his vocal criticism of France's aggressive expansionism; however, the letters are addressed anonymously to "mon ami." Quatremère only revealed Miranda's identity in the preface to the 1836 edition.

confiscations and 37 in favour of them, respectively).[836] Quatremère, who had fled the country after having been sentenced to death due to his participation in the failed royalist uprising of 13 Vendémiaire, decried the conquest of Italy as antithetical to the "spirit of liberty" [837] and the confiscation of its art as "crime of treason against public education."[838] He argued instead for a pan-European "Republic of Arts" with Rome as its capital, united in the pursuit of truth and beauty.[839] Rome, he explains, was "immovable in its totality," a veritable museum comprised not simply of its famous monuments, but also "places, sites, mountains, quarries, ancient roads, the respective position of ruined cities, geographic traditions, relationships between all objects, memories, local traditions, [and] still extant uses."[840] This rich and unique context was essential to the study of Rome's art, and thus, to remove its treasures to Paris would be to deprive them of the educational and artistic values that Republican officials ascribed to the new museum.

Quatremère revisited these arguments in the *Considérations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art*, which he had drafted in 1806, but did not publish until after Napoleon was finally vanquished at Waterloo in June 1815. In the intervening years,

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[836] The two petitions are reprinted in Quatremère de Quincy 1989, pp.141-46. For the contemporary debates on the Napoleonic confiscations of 1796, see Pommier 1991, pp. 403ff.

[837] Quatremère de Quincy 1989, p. 87.

[838] Quatremère de Quincy 1989, p. 105.

[839] Quatremère de Quincy 1989, p. 88.

[840] Quatremère de Quincy 1989, p. 101: "La veritable muséum de Rome, celui dont je parle,se compose, il est vrai, de statues, de colosses, de temples, d'obélisques, de colonnes triomphales, de thermes, de cirques, d'amphithéâtres, d'arcs de triomphe, de tombeaux, de stucs, de fresques, de bas-reliefs, d'inscriptions, de fragments d'ornements, de matériaux de construction, de meubles, d'ustensiles, etc. mais il ne se compose pas moins des lieux, des sites, des montagnes, des carriers, des routes antiques, des positions respectives des villes ruinées, des rapports géographiques, des relations de tous les objets entre eux, des souvenirs, des traditions locales, des usages encore existants, des parallèles et des rapprochements qui ne peuvent se faire que dans le pays meme."

the Grand Gallery had been completely overhauled and its collections dramatically expanded with successive conquests; in this fully realized state, the Louvre quickly secured its reputation as a wonder of the modern world. With the decisive defeat of France, museum officials were disinclined to part with their treasures, insisting they maintained legal ownership of confiscated property under the terms of previous treaties.[841] In response, the Prussian army arrived in Paris in July to forcibly reclaim its paintings, prompting other countries to demand repatriation of confiscated property. However, many of these works were not returned to their respective churches, but were instead transferred to new public museums that were being established in European centres in emulation of the Louvre.[842] For example, the Vatican Pinacoteca, which opened in 1817, retained many of the famous altarpieces – including Raphael's *Transfiguration* and *Madonna of Foligno* – formerly belonging to religious institutions dispersed throughout the papal states.[843] With the morality of spoliation no longer at issue, Quatremère's critique thus shifted to the museum itself.

To return a formerly purposeful work of art to its country of origin made little difference to Quatremère if it was to be transferred to another museum. Whereas he insisted in the *Lettres sur le déplacement des monuments* that works of art must be viewed in their original geographic environment in order to fully appreciate and understand them,

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[841] For an overview of the events surrounding the repatriation of confiscated goods, see Johns 1998, ch. 7, "'This Great Cavern of Stolen Goods': Canova and the Repatriation of the Papal Collections from Paris in 1815."

[842] On the impact of the Louvre and subsequent establishment of museums in Europe and North American, see Duncan and Wallach 1980.

[843] Pietrangeli 1983, ch. 7, "Reconstitution and growth of the Vatican Museums from Pius VII to Pius VIII (1800-1831)."

in the *Considerations morales*, this notion of context is more profoundly tied to function. Quatremère believed that art must serve a "useful and noble purpose."[844] The museum, he argues, was the very antithesis of utility, severing works of art from their societal role, and thereby irreparably diminishing their capacity to affect viewers. And, whereas the arguments of the *Lettres sur la déplacement* are addressed to a like-minded interlocutor, in the *Considerations morales*, Quatremère's insistent and accusatory use of direct address implicates instead the connoisseurs and bureaucrats who oversaw the creation of Europe's new museums. He writes:

> To what wretched destiny do you condemn Art if its products are no longer tied to the needs of society … Let us not pretend that works of art are preserved in those depositories. You may have carried the physical matter there; but have you also brought the train of sensations, tender, profound, melancholy, sublime, and touching that enveloped them. Have you brought to your storerooms the network of ideas and relations that made the works alive with interest?[845]

Almost two centuries after the *Considerations morales* first appeared, the modernity of Quatremère's impassioned jeremiad is remarkable: it is, in effect, a fully developed critique of the museum as a public institution. Indeed, Quatremère's scathing indictment that the museum "kills art to make history," which concludes the first part of the *Considerations morales*,[846] continues to reverberate through the vast body of criticism

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[844] Quatremère de Quincy 1815, p. 7: "Mon but est de montrer que l'utilité morale des ouvrages d'Art, où leur application à un emploi noble et déterminé, est la plus importante des conditions nécessaires à l'artiste et à l'amateur pour produire et pour juger; au public, pour sentir et goûter les beautés de l'imitation."

[845] Quatremère de Quincy 1815, pp. 56-57: "À quelle triste destinée condamnez-vous les Arts, si leurs produits ne doivent plus se lier à aucun des besoins de la société … Ne nous dites plus que les ouvrages de l'Art se conservent dans ces dépôts. Oui, vous y en avez transporté la matière ; mais avez-vous pu transporter avec eux ce cortège de sensations tendres, profondes, mélancoliques, sublimes ou touchantes, qui les environnait. Avez-vous pu transférer dans vos magasins cet ensemble d'idées et de rapports qui répandait un si vif intérêt sur les oeuvres."

[846] Quatremère de Quincy 1815: "C'est tuer l'Art pour en faire l'histoire."

directed at the museum that emerged since the late 1980s, which, in turn, have led to the academic and curatorial interventions to recontextualize and reassemble altarpieces that were discussed in the introduction of this dissertation.[847]

Despite the efforts of Quatremère and his supporters, everything had changed with the dawn of the museum age in revolutionary France. At the outset of the eighteenth century, the removal of altarpieces was an unremarkable, albeit still contentious, occurrence. But by the mid-nineteenth century, the rapidly escalating demand for historically significant paintings to fill newly established state galleries and the concomitant suppression of churches and monasteries brought on by Italian unification meant that virtually any altarpiece that could be removed was removed regardless of its artist, period, or subject. Altarpieces – *pale* as well as polyptychs, narrative scenes as well as *sacre conversazioni* – were dismantled and carved up into countless, transportable panels that could be readily sold to collectors, a practice that was also highly lucrative for their owners.[848] Within the span of a few short decades, the countless fragments of Italy's altarpieces were irrevocably dispersed in collections around the globe.

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[847] Quatremère's critique is echoed in Theodor Adorno's influential 1953 essay, "Valéry Proust Museum," which equates museums with mausoleums ("family sepulchres of works of art"); Adorno 1967. For the impact of Quatremère in the twentieth century, see Poulot 2012, pp. 6-10.

[848] Although this practice did not occur on a large scale before the late eighteenth century, altarpiece fragments were already in circulation by the early-seventeenth century. For example, Antonello da Messina's 1476 sacra conversazione for the church of S. Cassiano altarpiece in Venice – a monumental *pala* in the manner of Bellini's destroyed St Catherine of Siena altarpiece in SS. Giovanni e Paolo – was cut down into five marketable fragments sometime at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and subsequently acquired by Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, one of which, the figure of St Nicholas, appears in one of David Teniers's gallery paintings of the noted collection of the Archduke Leopold. The three central panels were reunited in 1929; however, the other two, which are known through seventeenth-century copies are lost. Humfrey 1993a, pp. 345-46.

Conclusion

In the preceding account of the aestheticization and dislocation of altarpieces in early-moden Italy, we have seen that powerful institutional bonds and tacit conventions of religious propriety discouraged their removal from churches well into the seventeenth century. In practical terms, it was an exceedingly difficult thing to do. Only the most powerful collectors had the financial and political resources to overcome local protests, ecclesiastical resistance, and legal obstacles. But perhaps the greatest hurdle was the very idea of it. For the reconstitution of an altarpiece as a gallery painting was, in the first place, predicated on the maturation of the theory and practice of art collecting.

To put it another way, when altarpieces finally began to trickle out of chapels and into private galleries at the end of the sixteenth century, the threshold crossed was not the spectators' ability to consider altarpieces in aesthetic terms, but their ability to conceive of an alternate context in which to do so. Indeed, the sheer force of the aesthetic response of those seventeenth-century collectors who sought out altarpieces with a single-minded determination – an impetus that did not arise from their loss of faith or the diminished power of religious images – should prompt us to reconsider the reception of altarpieces during the sixteenth century as well. It is important to distinguish between aestheticization and collecting as separate events. Scholarship on early-modern Italian art often conflates the two, which has the effect of understating the extent of the former and overstating the extent of the latter. But treating these as independent, and not necessarily simultaneous phenomena, allows us to gain a more nuanced understanding of the forces that ultimately led to the dislocation of altarpieces.

There is much evidence that connoisseurial viewers regarded certain altarpieces predominantly as works of art from the time that they were first installed. I endeavoured to explore the development of an aesthetic discourse around public, religious art – from the rise of *ius patronatus* as an economically motivated form of piety in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, through the encroachment of artistic criteria such as invention and difficulty in the critical evaluation and extra-liturgical use of altarpieces in th early sixteenth century, and, finally, to the bifurcation of religion and art that dominated the post-Tridentine discourse on sacred images. By the end of the sixteenth century, the "institutionalization" of collecting in private galleries provided a legimate venue for viewing altarpieces as works of art as well as a conceptual framework that was potent enough to supplant former associations to liturgical functions and contexts (especially once the altarpiece in question was reframed in order to conform with other gallery paintings). Shifts in the production and consumption of art in the seventeeth century – the increasing authority of the connoisseur, the rise of the art market, and the rapid inflation in financial value of old master paintings – gave covetous viewers the motivation and means to acquire them.

If the development of collecting was instrumental in facilitating the recontextualization of altarpieces, then the altarpieces that were removed had to be congruent with contemporary discourse on the pictorial arts. That is to say, when emerging ideas of art historical representativeness were inchoate at best, collectors and connoisseurs responded, as we would expect, to those altarpieces that most closely resembled gallery paintings. In the seventeenth century, ambitious, large-scale history painting – especially by central Italian artists of the early sixteenth century – still stood atop the hierarchy of

artistic genres.

Table 1 lists the altarpieces and other paintings in churches discussed in this dissertation sorted in ascending order according to the date when they were removed and categorized by genre (i.e., narrative, devotional group, single saints, and *sacre conversazioni*). The survey is substantial enough that clear patterns emerge. Through the entire chronological scope of the table (1481-1703), narrative altarpieces outnumber *sacre conversazioni* by nearly three to one and, significantly, no polyptychs appear on the list. Generally speaking, seventeenth-century collectors tended to seek out those altarpieces that deviated from traditional altarpiece formats (e.g., polyptychs and *sacre conversazioni*) and pictorial conventions (e.g., symmetry and fronality), and avoided those that did not – even when the artist in question was highly esteemed (it is perhaps the subject of another project to catalogue altarpieces by famous artists that were otherwise ignored by collectors).

Narrative altarpieces, especially those that featured complex, multi-figured compositions, were not unlike the new genres of easel paintings that filled picture galleries. Biblical scenes, after all, were an especially popular subject, favoured by many collectors for the high-minded gravity and undisputed decorousness of their themes. Conversely, the typology of *sacre conversazioni* was more profoundly connected to its liturgical and devotional vocation than narrative altarpieces, having evolved directly from the polyptych format in lockstep with the rapid expansion of lay patronage during the fifteenth century. Unlike narrative altarpieces, these atemporal assemblages of religious personages had no pictorial analogue outside of this strictly defined devotional context, thus inhibiting the disassociation of the painting from its function. Nor were their static and symmetrical arrays of frontally disposed intercessors particularly conducive to the demonstrations of

difficulty and complexity that so appealed to collectors. The first *sacra conversazioni* listed is Correggio's *God the Father with Sts Bartholomew and John*, which was removed in 1613 and is only the nineteenth of the seventy-three paintings listed in the table. While a handful of pictorially innovative *sacre conversazioni*, such as Correggio's *Madonna with St George* and *Madonna with St Sebastian*, would have appealed to seventeenth-century connoisseurs by virtue of their delicate colouring and exquisitely rendered figures, more traditional compositions were evidently far less desirable.

By the second half of the seventeenth century, however, as the removal of altarpieces became a more common practice and as the demand escalated for paintings by artists of the High Renaissance in particular, the distinction between narrative and liturgical modes had already begun to give way. One of Raphael's *sacra conversazione*, the *Madonna of Foligno*, became an object of desire for collectors throughout the Italian peninsula and beyond. Similarly, the Tuscan altarpieces taken by Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici may have been targeted simply for their availability. Ferdinando collected many narrative altarpieces from the seventeenth century, which may be partly due to the Counter Reformation fashion for scenes of saints' lives; but of the early-sixteenth-century altarpieces he acquired, none depicted narrative subjects. Rather, five were monumental *sacre conversazioni*, one was a devotional group, and one was a single saint – their availability of to Ferdinando, one suspects, may have been partly due to their lack of appeal to previous generations of collectors. But by the time of the Napoleonic invasions of Italy, the suppression of religious institutions and the importance of museological criteria made any qualitative distinction between devotional and aesthetic criteria irrelevant. Any altarpiece could be recontextualized as a gallery painting.

But what is significant is not only collectors' willingness to regard what were, *ipso facto*, eucharistic images as works of art, but also how deliberate their choices were. During this period there was frequent and pervasive debate among ecclesiastics, artists, and commentators about the purpose of religious art, how painters were to depict sacred subjects, and how devout viewers should respond to images. And yet, as Cardinal Paleotti and Raffaello Borghini had already recognized in the 1580s, it was the viewers who determined whether a painting was sacred or not. And perhaps, for these viewers – both collectors and ecclesiastics – the line between what was sacred and what was profane was more clearly drawn than is often acknowledged.

I do not mean to return to a canonical understanding of Renaissance and Baroque art and am aware of the distortions inherent in focusing on one category of viewer response. But in doing so, I hope to have demonstrated that the widely accepted characterization of the period as one during which aesthetic and devotional responses were always and inseparably intermingled can be equally fraught in its equivocation. Indeed, there is much to be gained for our understanding of both categories of images by considering the specific ways in which viewers responded to them. Ultimately, any account of early modern viewers of religious images will always remain partial and imperfect. But if we are to move nearer to an understanding of viewer response, we must not discount the evidence of art's own history.

Table 1. Summary of Altarpieces and Other Paintings Removed from Churches

TYPE		To 1600	1600-1650	1651-1703	TOTAL
Narrative	N	5	19	22	46
Sacra Conversazione	SC	0	6	10	16
Devotional Group	D	5	1	1	7
Single Figure / Saint	St	3	2	1	6

ARTIST	SUBJECT	CREATED	LOCATION	COLLECTOR	REMOVED	TYPE
Leonardo da Vinci	Adoration of the Magi	1480	Intended for S. Donato a Scopeto, Florence	Amerigo Benci	After 1481	N
Michelangelo	Entombment	1500	Intended for S. Antonio, Rome	Cardinal Raffaele Riario?	After 1501	N
Fra Bartolommeo	St Sebastian	c. 1515	S. Marco (choir), Florence	Francis I, King of France	1529	St
Andrea del Sarto	Holy Family	Early 1520s	Villa Bracci (domestic chapel), Rovezzano	Jacopo Salviati	1580	D
Andrea del Sarto	Annunciation	1528	SS. Annunziata, Florence	Ferdinando de' Medici (Cardinal)	1580	N
Raphael	Madonna dell'Impannata	c. 1513-15	Palazzo Medici (domestic chapel), Florence	Ferdinando de' Medici (Grand Duke)	1589	D
Botticelli	Adoration of the Magi	c. 1475-78	Palazzo Mondragone (domestic chapel), Florence	Don'Antonio de' Medici	by 1588	N
Raphael	Madonna of Loreto	1511	S. Maria del Popolo, Rome	Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato	1591	D
Raphael	Portrait of Julius II	1511	S. Maria del Popolo, Rome	Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato	1591	St
Sebastiano del Piombo	Visitation	1518-19	Château at Fontainebleau (Lower Chapel)	Henry IV, King of France	1590s	N
Raphael	St Michael	1518	Unknown	Henry IV, King of France	1590s	St
Raphael	Holy Family	1518	Château at Fontainebleau (Royal Chapel)	Henry IV, King of France	1590s	D
Leonardo da Vinci	Virgin of the Rocks	1483-84	Unknown	Henry IV, King of France	by 1599	D
Caravaggio	Inspiration of St Matthew	1602	Intended for S. Luigi dei Francesi, Rome	Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani	1602	N

ARTIST	SUBJECT	CREATED	LOCATION	COLLECTOR	REMOVED	TYPE
Albrecht Dürer	Feast of the Rose Garlands	1505-06	S. Bartolomeo, Venice	Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor	1606	N
Caravaggio	Madonna of the Serpent	1606	Intended for St Peter's, Rome	Cardinal Scipione Borghese	1606	N
Francesco Francia	St Sebastian	1522	S. Maria della Misericordia, Bologna	Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani	1606	St
Caravaggio	Death of the Virgin	1607	Intended for S. Maria della Scala, Rome	Duke Vincenzo I Gonzaga	1607	N
Raphael	Entombment	1507	S. Francesco, Perugia	Cardinal Scipione Borghese	1608	N
Correggio	God the Father with Sts Bartholomew and John	Unknown	S. Maria della Misericordia, Correggio	Don Siro, Prince of Correggio	1613	SC
Andrea del Sarto	Archangel Raphael with Tobias, S. Leonardo, Donor	1512	S. Lucia, Settimello	Grand Duke, Cosimo II de' Medici	1618	N
Andrea del Sarto	Madonna of S. Ambrogio	c. 1515	S. Maria della Neve presso S. Ambrogio, Florence	Cardinal Carlo de' Medici	1619	SC
Fra Bartolommeo	Pietà	c. 1511	S. Jacopo tra' Fossi, Florence	Cardinal Carlo de' Medici	1619	N
Perugino	Pietà	c. 1493-94	S. Giovannino detto della Calza, Florence	Maria Maddalena del Medici	by 1620	N
Cecco di Caravaggio	Resurrection	1619	S. Felicità, Florence	Cardinal Scipione Borghese	1620	N
Andrea del Sarto	Disputà	c. 1517	S. Jacopo tra' Fossi, Florence	Maria Maddalena de' Medici	by 1627	N
Andrea del Sarto	Annunciation with St Michael	c. 1523	Badia of S. Godenzo, Florence	Cardinal Carlo de' Medici	1627	N
Filippino Lippi	Adoration of the Magi	1479	S. Donato a Scopeto, Florence	Cardinal Carlo de' Medici	1627	N
Andrea del Sarto	Annunciation	c. 1512	S. Jacopo tra' Fossi, Florence	Maria Maddalena de' Medici	1627	N
Cigoli	Vocation of St Peter	1604-07	Duomo, Livorno	Maria Maddalena de' Medici	1628	N
Parmigianino	Mystic Marriage of St Catherine	1522	S. Pietro, Viadana	Unknown	1630	SC
Fra Bartolommeo	Isaiah / Job	1516	SS. Annunziata, Florence	Cardinal Carlo de' Medici	1631	St
Fra Carnevale	Birth of the Virgin / Presentation of the Virgin	1466	S. Maria della Bella, Urbino	Cardinal Antonio Barberini	1631	N
Andrea del Sarto	Gambassi Altarpiece	1523-24	SS. Lorenzo e Onofrio, Florence	Medici family	by 1637	SC
Andrea del Sarto	Passerini Assumption	1526	S. Antonio Abbate, Cortona	Grand Duke Ferdinando II de' Medici	1638	N

ARTIST	SUBJECT	CREATED	LOCATION	COLLECTOR	REMOVED	TYPE
Raphael	Madonna del Pesce	c. 1513-14	S. Domenico, Naples	Ramiro Núñez de Guzmán, Spanish Viceroy of Naples	1638	D
Correggio	Rest on the Flight into Egypt	c. 1520	S. Francesco, Correggio	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	1638	N
Correggio	Adoration of the Shepherds	by 1522	S. Prospero, Reggio Emilia	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	1640	N
Tintoretto	Christ Washing of the Feet of the Disciples	c. 1545-50	S. Marcuola, Venice	Charles I, King of England	by 1642	N
Correggio	Madonna di Albinea	1517	S. Prospero, Albinea	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	1647	SC
Correggio	Madonna of St George	by 1530	S. Pietro Martire, Modena	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	1649	SC
Perugino	Vision of St Bernard	1489-90	S. Maria Maddalena di Cestello, Florence	Ortensia Capponi	1651	N
Tintoretto	Assumption	c. 1550	S. Benedetto, Venice	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	1653	N
Raphael	Visitation	c. 1519-20	S. Silvestro, Aquila	Philip IV, King of Spain	1655	N
Correggio	Madonna of St Sebastian	c. 1523-24	S. Sebastiano, Modena	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	by 1657	SC
Dosso Dossi	Four Fathers	1527	Duomo, Modena	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	by 1657	N
Dosso Dossi	Madonna Enthroned with Sts George and Michael	1520	S. Agostino Modena	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	by 1657	SC
Dosso Dossi	Madonna Enthroned with Sts Sebastian and George	1510s	Unknown	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	by 1657	SC
Cima da Conegliano	Lamentation	c. 1495-97	S. Niccolò, Carpi	Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena	by 1658	N
Annibale Carracci	St Roch Distributing Alms	c. 1594-95	S. Prospero, Reggio Emila	Alfonso IV d'Este, Duke of Modena	1661	N
Annibale Carracci	Assumption	1587	Duomo, Reggio Emilia	Alfonso IV d'Este, Duke of Modena	1661	N
Annibale Carracci	Madonna Enthroned with St Matthew	1588	S. Prospero, Reggio Emilia	Alfonso IV d'Este, Duke of Modena	1661	N
Camillo Procaccini	St Roch Giving the Sacrament to the Plague-Stricken	1585-87	S. Prospero, Reggio Emilia	Alfonso IV d'Este, Duke of Modena	1661	N
Ludovico Carracci	S. Bernardino Liberating Carpi	1619	S. Bernardino, Carpi	Alfonso IV d'Este, Duke of Modena	1661	N
Raphael	Spasimo di Sicilia	c. 1515-16	S. Maria dello Spasimo, Palermo	Philip IV, King of Spain	1662	N
Raphael	Colonna Altarpiece, Predella	1504	S. Antonio, Perugia	Christina, Queen of Sweden	1663	N

ARTIST	SUBJECT	CREATED	LOCATION	COLLECTOR	REMOVED	TYPE
Jacopo del Bassano	Madonna Enthroned with Sts Anthony Abbot and Martin	1542-43	S. Martino at Rasai	Giovanni Battista Volpato	1674	SC
Jacopo del Bassano	Madonna Enthroned with Sts James and John the Baptist	1545-50	S. Giacomo Maggiore, Tomo	Giovanni Battista Volpato	1674	SC
Raphael	Colonna Altarpiece, Main Panel	1504	S. Antonio, Perugia	Count Giovan'Antonio Bigazzini	1677	SC
Carlo Dolci	Virgin Appearing before St Louis of Toulouse	c. 1675	Intended for S. Francesco, Prato	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1686	N
Fra Bartolommeo	Mystic Marriage of St Catherine	1512-13	S. Marco, Florence	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1690	SC
Fra Bartolommeo	Pala della Signora	1510-17	S. Lorenzo, Florence	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1691	SC
Cigoli	Deposition	1600-08	S. Stefano, Empoli	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1690	N
Rosso Fiorentino	Dei Altarpiece	1522	S. Spirito, Florence	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1691	SC
Francesco Bassano	Martyrdom of St Catherine	c. 1590	S. Giovannino degli Scolopi, Florence	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1692	N
Fra Bartolommeo	St Mark	1515	S. Marco, Florence	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1692	St
Guercino	Martyrdom of St Bartholomew	1635-36	S. Martino, Siena	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1693	N
Orazio Riminaldi	Martyrdom of St Cecila	late 1610s	S. Caterina, Siena	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1693	N
Annibale Carracci	Christ in Glory with Saints	c. 1597	Hermitage, Camaldoli	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1697	N
Raphael	Madonna del Baldacchino	1507-08	Duomo, Pescia	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1697	N
Carlo Maratta	Virgin Appearing before S. Filippo Neri	c. 1670	S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini, Florence	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	by 1698	N
Orazio Riminaldi	Moses Raising the Brazen Serpent	1625	Duomo, Pisa	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	by 1698	N
Parmigianino	Madonna of the Long Neck	1534-40	S. Maria dei Servi, Parma	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1698	D
Giovanni Lanfranco	Ecstasy of St Margaret	1622	S. Maria Nova, Cortona	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1700	N
Andrea del Sarto	Madonna of the Harpies	1515-17	S. Francesco dei Macci, Florence	Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici	1703	SC

Appendix 1. The Theft of Parmigianino's *Madonna Enthroned* from S. Pietro at Viadana

The following documents were published in Italian in Giuseppe Campori, *Lettere artistiche inedite*, Modena, 1866.

1. Cardinal Pietro Campori to the Provost of S. Pietro at Viadana, 2 February, doc. CXXV, p. 101.

La chiesa è per terra e Dio sa quando mai si rifabbricherà. Intendo che un ancona di mano del Parmigianino che era in una di quelle capelle è stata venduta a Parma et voi non solamente non la fate restituire ma nè anche mi avisate che sia stata levata, et pure sapete che quello che una volta è stato dedicato al culto divino non si può convertire in uso di persone et luoghi del secolo. Desidero che facciate ogni opera di farla riportare a Viadana in qualche luogo sicuro per collocarla al suo sito quando sarà tempo et che voi ritorniate quanto prima potrete a pascere le vostre pecorelle che vi aspettano con gran desiderio Et il S.r Iddio vi assisti sempre con la sua santa gratia. Di Cremona li 2 di Febr 1630

The Church is of the earth, and God knows whenever the church is altered. I am speaking of an altarpiece by the hand of Parmigianino, which was in one of the chapels and was sold to someone in Parma. Not only did you not have it returned, but also you did not advise me that it had been removed, knowing full well that what once was devoted to divine worship cannot be converted to personal use in secular places. I want you to do whatever you can to have it brought back to Viadana to somewhere safe, and that when there is time to return as soon as you can to feed your sheep who await you with great desire. May God always help you with his holy grace. Cremona, 2 February 1630

2. Campori to Odoardo Farnese, Duke of Parma, 5 February 1630, doc. CXXVI, p. 101.

Farà ricorso a V.ra Alt.a il Preposto di S Pietro di Viadana per recuperare un'Icona di un altare della sua chiesa che con occasione di rumori bellici di quella Terra è stata levata dal suo luogo per salvarla, et portata nello stato di V.A. viene ora nascosta et ritenuta per forza senza volerla restituire alla sua chiesa. È un opera degna della pietà che esemplarmente risplende nella sua Ser.ma persona et che concerne il servitio del S.r Iddio et l'honore della B.ma Vergine. Io supplico affettuosissimamente l'Alt.a V.ra di sentirlo con la solita sua benignità, et porgergli l'aviso suo che lo riceverò per gratia segnalata et le bacio affettuosamente le mani. Di Cremona li V di Feb.o 1630

I have directed the Provost of S. Pietro di Viadana seek recourse with Your Highness to retrieve an altarpiece from an altar of his church that, due to rumours of war, had been removed from its place to ensure its safety. It was taken to your state and is now considered concealed and retained without intention of being returned to his church. It is a work worthy of your exemplary piety and anyone who serves God and honours the Virgin. I plead with affection to Your Highness to treat the matter with your usual kindness and to give notice of your judgment that I will receive by your distinguished grace and humbly kiss your hands. Cremona, 5 February 1630.

3. Campori to D. Fioravante Medolati, Provost of Viadana to Colorno, 5 March 1630, doc CXXV, p. 102.

Rispondo senza dilatione di tempo alla vostra lettera dei 3 del corrente perché vedo in essa che il detentore della Pittura levata sacrilegamente dalla vostra chiesa va pubblicando che la tiene con mio beneplacito. La verità è che un P. Theatino nativo di questa città che sta di famiglia a Parma me ne fece parlare due volte da Mons. di S.to Antonio senza esprimere il nome della persona che lo mandava et io li risposi la 1.a e 2.a volta che *redderet quae erant Dei Deo*, perché non potevo, nè volevo in modo alcuno consentire che la Chiesa Prepositurale di S Pietro di Viadana restasse privata di una tale pittura la quale da tempo immemorabile era stata quivi honorata et venerata con particolare devolione di tutta quella Terra. L'istesso replico ora a voi cioè che non ho consentito nè consento a tale detentione et impongo di far ogni possibile diligenza per recuperarla et riportarla poi a suo tempo alla vostra chiesa di S. Pietro, et quando la persona che la tiene non voglia farla amorevolmente restituire non mancate di ricorrere al S.r Duca Ser.mo al quale scrivo l'allegata in vostra credenza, che son ben sicuro che per la sua gran pietà non lassarà di prestarvi in ciò l'ajuto suo, et finalmente avvisatemi precisamente il nome della persona che l'ha levata da Viadana et venduta et che hora la tiene acciocchè bisognando io possi far procedere alle censure contra tali sacrilegi ma avvertite che sarà necessario di giustificar ogni cosa per poter procedere canonicamente alle sopradette censure. Rimando le scritture che mi avete inviate a questo effetto et vi prego dal S.re ogni bene Di Cremona li V di Marzo 1630

I respond without delay to your letter of the third of the current month because in it I read that the holder of Painting, which was sacrilegiously removed from your church, claims that he retains it with my blessing. The truth is that a Theatine priest native to this city, who has family in Parma, has been ordered to speak to me twice by the Monsignor of S. Antonio, without naming the person who took it. I responded to them on both occasions "redderet quae erant Dei Deo" because I could not nor did I in any way consent that the Provostal Church of S. Pietro in Viadana should remain deprived of such a painting, which had been there since time immemorial and had been honoured and venerated with special devotion throughout the land. I reply the same to you now, that is, I did not consent nor do I now consent to this detention and enjoin you to undertake every possible diligence to recover and return the altarpiece to your church of S. Pietro. And if the person who possesses it will not willingly return it, do not hesitate to seek recourse with the duke, to whom I write the attached and entrust with you, whom I am certain, with his great piety, cannot but come to your aid. And finally, let me know exactly the name of the person who has taken the altarpiece from Viadana and now keeps it lest that I can proceed with the censure of this sacrilege, but be warned that it will be necessary to justify anything to do with abovementioned censure. I will reference the letters that you have sent to me to this effect. Cremona, 5 March 1630.

Appendix 2. The Sale of Raphael's *Madonna Enthroned* from the convent of S. Antonio da Padua at Perugia

The following documents from the Archivio di Stato in Perugia were published in Adamo Rossi, "Documenti per completare la storia di alcune opere di Raffaello già esistenti nell'Umbria, serie seconda. Sulla vendita della tavola del monastero di S. Antonio da Padova di Perugia," Giornale di erudizione artistica 3 (1874), 304-15. Translation adapted from Kathleen Walker-Meikle in Mara Hofmann, "The Provenance of the Altarpiece for Sant'Antonio da Padua in Perugia. Part I: The Complete Altarpiece," Mellon Digital Documentation Project, 2008 (http://cima.ng-london.org.uk/documentation/index.php).

1. Supplication to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to sell the predella

Perugia, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Notarile, 3934, fols. 450-452v, Rogiti di Gio. Battista Baldozzi, prot. dal 1659 al 63

(foris) Alla Sac. Congregatione sopra Vescovi e Regolari Per le Monache di S. Antonio da Padova di Perugia

(intus vero) Em.mi e R.mi Signori.

L'Abbadessa, e Monache di S. Antonio di Padua di Perugia uenendo astrette a pagare Collette, e debiti di carne già consumata per il prezzo di scudi 300. et altri debiti di grano, vino, et oglio fatti per uiuere che ascendono alla ualuta d'altri scudi 200. Ne hauendo alcun modo più facile, e meno dannoso al Monasterio per sodisfarli senza fare altri debiti uiui, dessiderano uendere cinque quadretti di Deuotione di buona mano ce hanno nel Coro interiore, e che non sono necessari ne seruono per tauole d'Altari ad effetto di estinguere li sopra nominati debiti con il prezzo di 500 scudi, ò altra somma maggiore con la copia de medemi quadretti da riporsi nel medesimo luogo. Supplicano pertanto l'EE. VV. a concederli l'opportuna licenza per fare la sopradetta vendita, e sottrarsi dalle loro urgenti necessita. Che d.a gratia ec.

(From) To the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars for the nuns of S. Antonio da Padova of Perugia.

(To) Most Eminent and most Reverend Gentlemen

The abbess and nuns of S. Antonio di Padua of Perugia, having been forced to pay bill collectors, and debts for meat already consumed at the price of 300 *scudi*, and other debts for grain, wine and oil, which are necessities, adding another 200 *scudi*, and not having any easier and less damaging way for the monastery to pay them without making another new debts, they wish to sell five small devotional paintings of good quality which they have in the inner choir, and which are neither necessary nor used as altarpieces, with the purpose of eliminating the abovementioned debts with the price of 500 *scudi*, or another higher sum, and with copies of the same little pictures to be put back in the same location. They beg Your Excellencies to grant them the appropriate licence to make the abovementioned sale, and relieve themselves from their urgent needs. With thanks given etc.

2. Approval of the sale of the predella by the S.C. of Bishops and Regulars, and licence from Marc'Antonio Oddi, bishop of Perugia, 6 April 1663

Perugia, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Notarile, 3934, fols. 450-452v, Rogiti di Gio. Battista Baldozzi, prot. dal 1659 al 63

Sacra Congregatio E. S. R. E. Cardinalium negocijs etc. praeposita attentis narratis ac audita relatione Episcopi Perusini censuit committendum prout presenti decreto committit ei ut constito sibi de veritate – petitam licentiam pro suo arbitrio et prudentia concedat; modo tamen praeuia edictorum affixione seu pubblicatione oblator utilior praeferatur, et precium in solutionem memoratorum debitorum ac in urgentes Monasterij necessitates iuxta placitum Episcopi erogetur. Romae 6 Aprilis 1663.

M. Card. Ginettus C. Episcopus Con. Secretarius.

The Sacred Congregation of the Most and Reverend Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, having listened and being told the statement placed before [it] by the Bishop of Perugia, has decreed by this present decree that the requested licence be granted on behalf of [the bishop's] own judgment and prudence. But for the use of the offerer it should be displayed by affixing it or by publication of the edicts, and the price should be paid out in payment for the remainder of the debt and the urgent needs of the nunnery according to the plea of the bishop. Rome 6th of April 1663.

Cardinal [Marzio] Ginetti, Cardinal Bishop, Secretary to the Congregation

III.mus at Reu.mus Episcopus et judex uisis dictis precibus dixit, pronunciauit, et declarauit fore ac esse concedendam licentiam, ac facultatem prout auctoritate dictae Sacrae Congregationis concessit atque impertitus fuit dicto Monsterio illiusque sororibus uendendi ac alienandi dictas quinque pictas tabellas de quibus in dictis precibus ac rescripto Sacrae Maiestati Christinae Suetiae Reginae pro pretio scutorum sexcentorum unius pro parte illius Maiestatis oblatorum pretiumque huiusmodi erogandi et conuertendi in solutionem dictorum debitorum nimirum.

The most illustrious and most venerable bishop and judge, regarding the seen and spoken requests, has said, proclaimed, and announced that a licence is granted and the ability by the mentioned authority of the Sacred Congregation who have granted and bestowed [the licence] on said nunnery and those sisters so that the mentioned five small paintings may be sold and transferred, which are in the mentioned requests and replies to her Sacred Majesty Christina, Queen of Sweden, for the price of six hundred and one *scudi*, the offered price being paid on the part of her Majesty and then being paid for the payment of said debt.

Claudio Inglesio Gallo pictori Perusiae degenti scuta triginta pro eius mercede et labore copiae suptradictarum quinque pictarum tabellarum per eum confectae et loco supradictarum uedendarum reponendae. (Sequuntur nomina et rationes aliorum creditorum).

To Claudio Inglesio Gallo, painter [and] resident of Perugia, thirty *scudi* for his pay and work in making copies of the aforementioned five small paintings and putting them in the place of the aforementioned sold ones (the names and accounts of the other creditors follow).

3. Sale of the predella

Perugia, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Notarile, 3943, fols. 445-449v, Rogiti di Gio. Battista Baldozzi, prot. dal 1659 al 63

Anno Domini millesimo sexcentesimo sexagesimo tertio Ind.ne prima tempore Pontificatus SS.mi in Christo Patris et D. N. D. Alexandri septimi – die uero Iouis septima mensis Iunij. Actum Perusiae in Ecclesia exteriori infrascripti Monasterij ante crates in ea existentes presentibus etc.

The year of our Lord 1663 first indiction in the time of the Pontificate of the most holy Father in Christ the Father and Lord of our Lord Alexander the Seventh – on Thursday, the seventh day of the month of the June. A deed of Perugia [done] in the outside of the church of the below-mentioned monastery among those existing [and] present, etc.

Cum fuerit et sit, quod RR. MM. Ven. Monasterij S. Antonij Patauini Ciuitatis Perusiae Sorores ordinis S. Clarae sub regulari regimine fratrum Minorum S. Francisci, qui de obseruantia uocantur ab immemorabili tempore citra, prout ipsae asseruerunt, intra earum Monasterij septa, et interiorem ecclesiam, seu Chorum, ubi preces, ac diuinas laudes secundum eorum regulae instituta persoluunt, habeant atque retineant ad Altare ibi locatum Tabulam ingentem sane egregiam, non tam specie, quam antiquitate insignem, non minus opere quam pietate conspicuam, omnique laude dignam, et ab eis maxima ueneratione habitam manu Raphaelis Vrbinatis Pictoris celeberrimi depictam cum pluribus imaginibus tanto artificio expressis, ut spirare uideantur, quae figuram nimirum representat Virginis Mariae in Throno sedentis Christum Iesum amiculis indutum gremio tenentis, ad cuius pedes puer Ioannes erectus inest, et stant a lateribus dextero nempe S. Petrus, et Sancta Catherina, sinistro uero Diuus Paulus, et D. Cecilia, quarum Virginum capita sunt uenustate, gratia, et crinali cultu miranda, super cuius Tabula, illiusque summitate aeternus Pater in semicirculo duobus cum Angelis, binisque Seraphinis perbelle et gloriose refulget. Ab inferiori uero parte in eiusdem Altaris loco, quem fregio seu Praedella uocant, tres subsunt pictae tabellae eiusdem Raphaelis manu ibidem expressae Dominicae Passionis misteria, seu

As it was and may be, that the most reverend nuns of the venerable monastery of St Anthony of Padua in the city of Perugia, who are sisters of the order of St Clare under the rule and direction of the Friars Minor of St Francis, who according to observance from time immemorial, as they have stated themselves, are enclosed within this monastery. In the interior of the church or choir, where they give prayers, and divine praises following the customs of the rule, they pray towards an altar, where a large [and] very fine panel is placed, distinguished not so much by its appearance, than by its antiquity, and is no less than a work of devotion, and worthy of the praise of all, and of highest veneration. It is painted by the hand of Raphael of Urbino, the most famous painter, who painted the figures with such remarkable skill, that they appear to breathe. The panel represents the Virgin Mary sitting on a throne with Jesus Christ, clothed in a cloak. Mary is holding [him] in [her] lap, at whose feet the boy John [the Baptist] is standing erect, and on the right side is St Peter and St Catherine, and on the left is the blessed Paul and the blessed Cecilia, and the heads of the virgins are attractive, graceful, and with wonderfully groomed hair. The panel above this [has] the Father on his eternal summit on an arch with two angels, and with two Seraphim, shining gloriously. Below the panel, placed on the same altar, which they call a frieze or predella, there are three small

historiam singula referentes paruulis figuris graphice, et ad uinum effectis adeo ut eas cum natura quasi certare, eamque superare contendant.

panels by the same hand of Raphael depicting the mysteries of the Passion of the Lord, telling each story with very small painted figures, and accomplished to such a degree so that they appear to vie with nature, and it might be disputed that they exceed it.

Quarum altera, quae uncias nouem, et quartos tres mensurae Perusini pedis longitudine non excedit, Christum ostendit in horto flexis genibus orantem cum Angeli apparitione, ei calicem de coelo porrigentis: tres insuper comprehendit Apostolos eius prope incentes, atque dormientes.

One of them, which does not exceed in height nine inches and three quarters of a Perugian foot, shows Christ in the garden praying on bended knees with an angel in attendance, a chalice stretching out from heaven towards him, and three of his Apostles, who are not noticing and sleeping.

Altera, quae in sui longitudine ad pedes usque duos eiusdem mensurae, et uncias quinque protenditur, Christum proponit ad Caluarium montem Crucem gestantem, et milites qui pulcherrimis motibus gesticulantes eum educunt et raptant, quorum duo equitantes procedunt, Mariaque Mater fere exanimis, Diuusque Iohannes, tribus cum Marijs mestitiam praeseferentibus post omnes insequuntur.

Another, which is in length two feet of the same measure and extends five inches, displays Christ carrying the Cross towards the mount of Calvary, and the soldiers who lead and drag him, gesticulating towards him with very graceful movements, and two [of the soldiers] are proceeding on horseback. Mother Mary [is] almost lifeless, and the blessed John, follows behind the three Marys, who are full of grief.

Tertia, quae eandem longitudinem obtinet unciarum nouem, quartorumque trium, quot primodicta, continet Christi Pietatem, corpore demortuo super gremio Mariae sedentis exento, quod a Diuo Ioanne flexo genibus sustinetur, illiusque pedes a Maria Magadalena in genua procumbente gemebunda, expansisque capillis deosculantur. A lateribus autem Ioseph ab Arimathaea et Nicodemus erecto corpore uisuntur.

The third, which has the length of nine inches, and three quarters of the previously mentioned [Perugian foot measure], contains the Pietà of Christ, his dead body stretched out on the lap of the seated Mary, where the blessed John on bended knees is held back, and at whose feet Mary Magdalene, sinking onto her knees and sighing, kisses [the feet] with her spread-out hair. On the sides, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both standing up, are viewing the body.

Praeter has trinas tabellas uncias octo, et quartum unum, et non amplius singulatim altas in pedestallo deauratarum columnarum Altare praedictum exornantium, aliae duae existunt pictae tabellae pariter eiusdem Raphaelis opere confectae singulae ad uncias octo, et quartum unum altitudine, et ad uncias quinque vacui

Besides these three little paintings, eight inches and one quarter, and not one greater in height than the pedestal of the gilded column embellishing the aforementioned altar, there are two little painted boards, also the work of the same Raphael. Each is eight inches and one quarter in height, and not extending more than

latitudine se se tantum extendentes, in quarum altera Diuus Franciscus, et in altera Diuus Anontius Patauinus ambo stantes conspiciuntur.

Verum quia dictae Sorores pluribus ab hinc annis, causantibus praeteriti belli turbinibus, collectis, impositionibus, ceterisque sinistris euentibus, pluribus debitis sint inuolutae et in maximis rerum augustiis, et difficultatibus reperiantur, adeo ut a suis creditoribus iuges molestias sustineant, et grauibus impensis equidem uexentur. Proinde mente reuoluentes, quod licet quinque tabellae praedictae sint eis, earumque Monasterio decori et ornamento nihilominus quia nullum omnino fructum producunt, et extra illud earum splendor, et claritas minime diffunditur, profecto tenent propter illarum alienationem ipsas Sorores obaeratas, et paupertate laborantes magnam utilitatem, earumque necessitatibus opportunum remedium fore recepturas, et a dictis debitis, augustijs, et dispendijs, quibus iugiter premuntur aliqua ex parte subleuandas: et ob inde prouide consuluerunt ad alienationem huiusmodi deuenire non minori studio, quam animi hilaritate, et cordis affectu, tanto magis quia dictae Imagines peruenturae sunt in manus Personae Regiae Maiestatis his, maioribusque dignissimae, a qua propter eximiam eius amplitudinem cum praeclara, et insigni pietate coniuncta nil aliud sperare, nil obtinere, nihilque referre possunt, nisi protectionem leuamen et opem, praeter id illae extra Monasterij tenebras, et penes regiam claritatem collocatae, earum candor, et splendor magis curruscabit, et nihilominus eisdem Sororibus tabula magna remanebit quae eisdem lucem subministrabit, atque pietatem. Quapropter conuocato, congregato, et coadunato de ordine et commissione R. M. Abbatissae ad sonum campanulae, ut moris est, Capitulo RR. Sororum dicti Monasterij, ubi interfuerint omnes inferius descriptae Vid. Ad modum R. M. Soror Clarix Abbatissa, R. M. Soror Christina Vicaria (sequuntur nomina aliarum monialium n.o 36),

five inches in width. In one is the blessed Francis, and in the other is the blessed Anthony of Padua, both appear standing.

Because the said Sisters for many years, caused by storms of the past war and other inauspicious events, have amassed many debts, they are entangled and have difficulties repaying, so much so that they have much trouble holding back their creditors, and are greatly disturbed. So it came to mind, that while the mentioned five paintings are a pleasing decoration to the monastery, they produce nothing of any profit, and apart from their splendour and not widely spread fame, surely they could support by means of their sale these Sisters in debt, and be of greater usefulness for those oppressed in debt, and be a suitable remedy against said debts and expenses, that continuously press them. And by providence they decided on the transfer by sale, with no less eagerness that a cheerfulness of mind and affection of the heart, as these said images are to arrive into the hands of the Person of Royal Majesty and more deserving of greater things than anybody else on account of her outstanding greatness, combined with splendid and notable piety, and they cannot give back anything apart from shelter, solace and help. Therefore the paintings] are placed all together into the hands of the notable queen, apart from the large panel, which will stay behind with the same Sisters, as it supplies them with light and piety. Wherefore, it being convened, assembled and joined by order and commission of the Reverend Mother Abbess with the sound of the little bell, so in this fashion the chapter of reverend sisters of said monastery (all concerned are named below). Accordingly, Reverend Mother Sister Clarissa Abbess, Reverend Mother Sister Christina Deputy (the names of 36 other nuns follow), all the sisters of said monastery have agreed and more than two thirds of the sisters have spoken, and thus representing the whole and entire chapter of the monastery. Having obtained in all and each

omnes Sorores dicti Monasterij et in eo professae uocem in capitulo habentes existentes, ut asserunt, ultra duas ex tribus partibus Sororum uocalium eiusdem, et sic totum, atque integrum eiusdem Monasterij repraesentantes Capitulum, quae sic capitulariter congregatae, agentes haec omnia et singula uigore licentiae et facultatis obtentae a Sacra Congregatione Em.orum S. Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalium negocijs, et consultationibus Episcoporum et Regularium praepositorum, nec non Decreti Ill.mi et Reu.mi Episcopi Perusini, illius uirtute seruatis seruandis desuper facti, quae omnia mihi notario dederunt, et consignauerunt ad effectum allegandi, et inserendi in presenti instrumento tenoris prout in fine eiusdem; nec non cum praesentia et consensu admodum RR. fratris Thomae a lacu Conuentus S. Francisci de Monte Ciuitatis praedictae ordinis minorum regularis obseruantiae Guardiani, dictique Monasterij S. Antonij regularis Superioris praesentis et consentientis etc. sponte etc. omni etc. jure dicti Monasterij etc. dederunt, uendiderunt, cesserunt, ac concesserunt.

[matter] the licence and ability from the Sacred Congregation of the Most and Reverend Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, in consultation with bishops and canons, [and] by the Decree of the most illustrious and most reverend Bishop of Perugia, who virtuously watches over them now and in the future, they granted to me the notary, and they have attested to the effect in the present legal instrument of the course to be commissioned and introduced, as to its end; with the present and complete agreement (previously mentioned) of the very reverend brother Thomas of the Convent of St Francis of Monte Civitatis of the minor regular order, their guardian, being of higher canonical rule than said monastery of St Anthony, being present and unanimous etc . free will etc. all etc. by law of said monastery etc. they have given, sold, ceded, and relinquished.

Sacrae Maiestati Christinae Suetiae Reginae in Vrbe commoranti, licet absenti, et pro ea

To her Sacred Majesty Queen Christina of Sweden, who has remained in the City, although absent, and on behalf of her

Ill.mo et Reu.mo Petro Bargelino nobili Bononiensi Prothonotario Apostolico de numero Participantium, vtriusque Signaturae sanctissimi D. Papae Referendario, Perusiae, Prouinciaeque Vmbriae Gubernatori Generali praesenti, et pro dicta sacra Maiestate, iliusque etc. vna mecum notario etc. stipulanti et recipienti supradictas quinque pictas tabellas, tres scilicet Dominicae Passionis mysteria, seu historiam repraesentantes, et alias duas Diuum Franciscum, Diuumque Antonium Patauinum referentes, ut supra memoratas, quas tunc in dictorum testium meique notarij praesentia ex dicto frigio, seu predella, et pedestallo respectiue Altaris supradicti, mediante Claudio cognomento Inglesio Gallo non contemnendo pictore ad huiusmodi finem

To the most illustrious and most reverend Pietro Bargelino, noble of Bologna, Apostolic Prothonotary, and with the seal of the most holy pope, to Perugia, and to the present Governor General of the province of Umbria, and on behalf of the mentioned Sacred Majesty, with me, the notary, the abovementioned five small paintings are promised and accepted: three depicting the mysteries of the Passion of the Lord (representing the story) and another two depicting the blessed Francis and the blessed Anthony of Padua, remembered and in the words of the witnesses and I, the notary. at present. They have been removed from the frieze or predella, and the pedestal of the aforementioned altar, by Claudio Inglesio Gallo, who is not a negligible painter.

Monasterij clausuram ingresso remouerunt, et loco illarum copia repositâ eiusdem Claudij manu nuperrime confectà per ostiolum cratis maioris Chorum inter, ubi existebant, et exteriorem Ecclesiam interiacentis tradiderunt et consignauerunt pro dicta Sacra Maiestate praefato Ill.mo ac Reu.mo D. Gubernatori praesenti, acceptanti, et recipienti ad effectum illas eidem Sacrae Maiestati ad Vrbem transmittendi etc. Ad habendum, tenendum, possidendum etc. et quicquid etc. cum omni jure etc. et eodem titulo, et causa uenditionis etc. dictae RR. Sorores dederunt uendiderunt etc. omnia jura etc. ponentes etc.

Claudio entered the cloister of the monastery throughout the small door and in their place replaced [the paintings] with copies made by his hand and they have been handed over and attested on behalf of said Sacred Majesty, the illustrious and most reverend lord governor being present, accepting, and receiving [the paintings] and then sending them to her Sacred Majesty in the City. To be had, held, and possessed etc. and with all rights to the title, and the stipulation of sale etc., said reverend sisters have given and sold all rights they hold.

Hanc autem uenditionem, cessionem, concessionem, omniaque et singula in praesenti instrumento contenta fuerunt supradictae RR. MM. ex causis et rationibus superius enarratis, et pro pretio, ac nomine pretij scutorum sexcentorum unius monetae romanae juliorum x. pro quolibet scuto, totidem pro parte dictae sacrae Maiestatis, ut in actis oblatorum, quae in dictorum testium, meique notarij praesentia habuerunt, ac receperunt in contanti, et pecunia numerata in tot monetis argenteis a dicta Sacra Maiestate, et pro ea ab Ill.mo ac Reu.mo Domino D. Marco Antonio Oddo Episcopo perusino S.mi D. N. Papae Domestico, et assistente per manus R. D. D. Angeli Angelini Praesbiteri Perusini eius agentis ibi praesentis et soluentis, ac soluere asserentis de pecunijs dicti Ill.mi D. Marci Antonij ab eo ad hunc effectum habitis pro alijs totidem per dictam sacram Maiestatem mediante Perill. et R. D. Stephano de Marchis eius domus praefecto positis ad creditum dicti Ill.mi Domini Marci Anonij in Vrbe in domo Sancti Spiritus, de quibus dictae RR. Sorores cum auctoritatibus supradictis fecerunt dictae Sacrae Maiestati, praefatoque Ill.mo Domino Oddo, mihique notario etc. finem refutationem, pactumque perpetuum de ulterius aliquid non petendo etc. etc.

By this sale, cession, and concession, in the present [legal] instrument the abovementioned reverend nuns, all and each one, were satisfied with the stipulations and reckoning explained above and the price. The price was 600 *scudi*, that is 10 Roman *giuli* for each *scudo* on the part of said sacred majesty. And [in front of] the said witnesses, and me, the notary present, they have received in cash, the money, all in silver and counted out, from said sacred majesty, and on her behalf, the most illustrious and reverend lord, Don Marco Antonio Oddi, Bishop of Perugia, servant of our most holy lord pope, and attended by the reverend lord, Don Angelo Angelino, Presbyter of Perugia, his agent there present and paying, who asserts that the money to pay the illustrious Don Marco Antonio from him, has been obtained for the others by the sacred majesty by means of the illustrious and reverend Don Stefano of the Marches, his house being placed towards the debt of said most illustrious Don Marco Antonio, in the city in the Church of S. Spirito, of which said reverend sisters had made legal titles regarding the abovementioned to said sacred majesty, and the illustrious Lord Oddi, and me the notary etc the end refutation, and perpetual pact, with no other being wanted.

Quae quidem scuta sexcenta unum dictae RR. Sorores pro adimplemento contentorum in supradictis facultatibus incontinenter soluerunt inferius descriptis praefati Monasterij creditoribus videlicet.

That the said reverend sisters having secured six hundred *scudi*, they have paid off the below mentioned said creditors of the monastery.

Supradicto Claudio Inglesio Pictori scuta triginta pro eius mercede et labore copiae supradictarum tabellarum per eum ut supra confectae, et ut praefertur loco supradicto repositae (sequuntur nomina aliorum octo creditorum et solutiones eis factae).

To the abovementioned Claudio Inglesio painter thirty *scudi* for his pay and work to make copies of the aforementioned little paintings, and to place the replacements in the aforementioned place (the names of eight other creditors and their payments are made).

4. Supplication to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to sell the main panel

Perugia, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Notarile, 4094, fols. 16-18, Rogiti di M. A. Fontaiuti, prot. del 1678

Ecce.mi et Reu.mi Signori.

L'Abbadessa e Suore Zoccolanti del Conuento di S. Antonio di Padoua di Perugia humilissime Oratrici delle EE. VV. riuerentemente le rappresentano che ritrouandosi con pochissime entrate non sufficienti a potersi mantenere, e con qualche debito, per receuere qualche sollieuo hanno desiderio e pensiero di far esito di un Quadro antico dipinto in una tauola, che si trouano nel Choro, o Chiesa interiore del Conuento per rinuestire il prezzo in beni stabili, giachè potria darsi il caso, che se ne trouasse una somma considerabile anche oltre ad un migliaro di scudi. Supplicano pertanto humilmente l'EE. VV. a dare ordine a Monsignor Vescouo di Perugia, che faccia considerare il valore di detto Quadro da due Pittori, e permetta la uendita quando si troui oblatore, hauendo l'Oratrici rincontro che ui sia persona di passaggio che lo ricerchi, e l'Oratrici non uorrebbero perdere la congiuntura atteso che il quadro si ua in qualche parte scrostando per la sua antichità. Che ec.

Most Excellent and most Eminent Sirs.

The abbess and the 'zoccolanti' sisters of the convent of S. Antonio di Padova of Perugia, most humble supplicants of Your Excellencies reverently explained to you that, finding themselves with very little income – insufficient to enable them to sustain themselves, and with some debts – in order to receive some relief, wish and intend to relinquish an old painting painted on panel, which is found in the choir, or inner church of the convent, to reinvest the price in fixed assets, as the case might be, that a considerable amount might be found even beyond a thousand *scudi*. Therefore they humbly beg Your Excellencies to order Monsignor Bishop of Perugia to have the value of the painting estimated by two painters, and to allow the sale when a buyer is found. There may be some passerby who may be looking for such a painting, and the supplicants would not want to miss the opportunity given that the painting is deteriorating in some part, due to its age.

5. Approval of the sale of the main panel a by the S.C. of Bishops and Regulars and licence from Luc'Alberto Patrizi, bishop of Perugia, 14 May 1677
Perugia, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Notarile, 4094, fols. 16-18, Rogiti di M. A. Fontaiuti, prot. del 1678

Sacra Congregatio Em.orum S. R. E. Cardinalium, negocijs, et consultationibus Episcoporum et Regularium praeposita benigne commisit Episcopo Perusino, ut uera existente praenarrata necessitate, petitam facultate pro suo arbitrio et conscientia Oratricibus concedat, dummodo pretium inde retrahendum in extinctionem praedicti aeris alieni, aliosque usus eidem monasterio necessarios, et utiles erogetur, reliquum uero in bonis stabilibus integre reinuestiatur. Rome 14 Maij, 1677.

A Card.lis Cybo. Io: Baptista Archiepiscopus Ianuensis Segretarius.

The Sacred Congregation of the Most and Reverend Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, in consultation with bishops and regulars, kindly entrust the bishop of Perugia, with the true, existing, and previously recounted need, so that [the College] may grant the supplicants, provided that [the money] is paid toward previously mentioned debts and other necessary uses for the monastery, and the remaining sum is reinvested completely in a good and stable [way] . Rome 14th of May, 1677.

Cardinal [Alderano] Cibo

Giovanni Battista [Spinola], Archbishop of Genoa, Secretary

Ill.mus et Reu.mus D. Episcopus, et Iudex Commissarius antedictus – uisis dictis precibus, ac Sacrae Congregationis rescripto, uisa fide extimationis supradictae tabulae pictae per peritos factae, uisis quoque fidibus supradictae Abbatissae et Discretarum praefati Monasterij – Dixit pronuntiauit ac declarauit fore et esse concedendam facultatem et licentiam prout auctoritate dictae Sacrae Congregationis qua in hac parte fungitur omnique alio meliori modo concessit atque impartitus fuit dictis Abbatissae et Sororibus Monasterij S. Antonij Patauini uendendi atque alienandi cuicunque personae seu personis emere uolentibus tabulam pictam de qua in dictis precibus, pro precio scutorum mille, et octicentorum iuxta extimationem a supradictis Peritis factam preciumque huiusmodi erogandi et immictendi in extinctione etc. etc.

Lucas Albertus Episcopus Perusinus.'

The illustrious and most reverend Lord Archbishop, and the previously mentioned Commissioner Judge – having seen the mentioned requests, and of the Sacred Congregation having replied, and having seen estimations faithfully done of the above mentioned painted panel by experts, having seen also by faithfulness of the abovementioned abbess and the previously mentioned distinguished monastery – it is said, proclaimed, and announced that a licence and the ability is granted by the authority of said Sacred Congregation, who performs and grants and was impartial to said abbess and sisters of the monastery of St Anthony of Padua. The painted panel may to be sold and transferred by sale to whichever person or persons who wish to buy [it] for the price of a thousand and eight hundred *scudi*, the estimate of the abovementioned experts and such price to be paid, etc.

Luc'Alberto, Bishop of Perugia'

6. Estimate of the main panel, 7 January 1678
Perugia, Archivio Diocesano, Processi super evidenti utilitate del 1678

Noi sottoscritti Pittori Perugini facciamo piena et indubitata fede, che hauendo ueduto uno quadro antico dipinto su una Tauola, che si troua nel Choro della Chiesa Interiore del Mon.ro delle Suore di S. Antonio di Padoua di Perugia e che per la sua antichità si uà su qualque parte scrostando di Longhezza di palmi otto e di Larghezza pure palmi otto nella di cui pittura si rappresentano un Dio Padre con doi Angeli, e doi Serafini. la Madonna nel seggio con il Bambino e S. Giouanni, da una parte S. Pietro e dall'altra S. Paulo, S. Margherita, e S. Cattarina, et hauendolo ben ueduto, e considerato si per la sperienza, come per la perizia, che avemo dell'arte giudicamo, che il giusto suo prezzo sia di scudi mille, e ottocento; e che il Compratore sia di più tenuto di lasciare alle Monache una copia di esso, e per tanto noi lo uenderessimo e comprarressimo se a noi stasse il uenderlo e comprarlo, ed in fede questo di 7 Genn.o 1678

Io Girolamo Ferri Pittore affermo et atesto per verità quanto sopra si contiene mano propria

Io Girolamo Fracassi affermo e atesto quanto nella retroscritta fede si contiene Mano propria

We, the undersigned painters from Perugia, faithfully declare that we have seen an old painting painted on a panel, which is found in the choir of the inner church of the monastery of the nuns of S Antonio Padua of Perugia and which, because of its age, is flaking in parts. [The panel] is eight 'palms' long and also eight 'palms' wide and in it are represented a God the Father with two angels, and two seraphim, the Madonna enthroned with the Child and St. John, on one side St. Peter and on the other St. Paul, St. Margaret and St. Catherine, and having seen it well, and considered both from the experience and expertise that we have of this art, we judge that its fair price should be one thousand and eight hundred *scudi*; and that the buyer should in addition leave to the nuns a copy of it, and therefore we would sell it and buy it if it was up to us to sell it and to buy it, and in faith this day of 7 January 1678

I Girolamo Ferri, painter affirm and state as true that above contains my own hand

I Girolamo Fracassi, affirm and state that the above written testimony contains my own hand'

8. Sale of the main panel to Count Antonio Bigazzini, 8 January 1678
Perugia, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Notarile, 4094, fols. 11v-15, Rogiti di M. A. Fontaiuti, prot. del 1678

Eisdem millesimo (1678) Indictione (prima) et Pontificatu (Innocentij undecimi) Die uero octaua mensis januarij. Actum Perusiae in V. Monasterio S. Antonij de Padua in Choro eiusdem Monasterij presentibus etc.

In the same year (1678), (first) indiction, and in the pontificate (of Innocent XI) where on the 8th day of the month of January. The act done in Perugia in the venerable monastery of St Anthony of Padua in choir of the same monastery, being present etc.

Coram Ill.mo et Reu.mo D. Luca Alberto de Patritijs meritissimo Episcopo Perusino, sedente etc. Conuocato, congregato, et cohadunato generali Capitulo RR. Monialium V. Monasterij S. Antonij de Padua in loco supradicto ad sonum

In the presence of the most illustrious and most reverend Don Luc'Alberto de Patrizi, most worthy bishop of Perugia. The general chapter of the most reverend nuns of the venerable monastery of St Anthony of Padua being

campanulae de ordine et mandato infrascriptae R. M. Abbatissae ubi interfuerunt infrascriptae videlicet.

Ad.m R. M. S. Victoria a Cornea Abbatissa

R. M. S. Iuditta Vicaria (sequuntur nomina aliarum Monialium n.o 28) quae ut supra capituraliter congregatae asserentes esse ultra duas ex tribus partibus vocem in capitulo habere illudque totum et integrum representare, uigore et in uim facultatis et licentiae ipsis concessae – Agentes infrascripta omnia et singula cum presentia licentia auctoriate et decreto praefati Ill.mi et Reu.mi D. Episcopi ibi presentis etc. nec non cum presentia et assistentia ad.um R. P. f. Clementis de Cannario Guardiani V. Conuentus S. Francisci de Monte Perusiae, Superioris, ac R. P. f. Francisci de Perusia Confessoris eiusdem Monasterij sponte etc. dederunt uendiderunt, cesserunt, ac libere tradiderunt

convened, assembled and joined together in the place mentioned above to the sound of the small bell of the order of the below-written Reverend Mother Abbess – where evidently the below-written [nuns] were present:

Addendum: Reverend Mother Superior Victoria a Cornea, Abbess

Reverend Mother Superior Judith, Deputy (followed by the names of 28 other nuns) that they being summarily assembled, more than two out of three parts of the chapter agreed, this representing the whole and entire [chapter], in vigour and strength of ability – each and every [of the nuns] below mentioned granting with the present authorised licence and the decree made previously from the most illustrious and most reverend lord bishop being here present etc . with the presence and assistance of Reverend Father Friar Clement de Cannario guardian of the convent of St Francis of Mount Perugia, Superior, and the Reverend Father Friar Francis of Perugia confessor of the same monastery, with free will etc. [the nuns] give, sell, concede, and hand over freely.

Ill.mo C. Com. Io: Antonio de Bigazzinis nobili Perusino presenti stipulanti et recipienti pro se, eiusque heredibus etc.

To the most illustrious Count Iohannes Antonio de Bigazzini, a noble of Perugia, present, in promise and guarantee for himself and for his heirs.

Depictam Tabulam opus celeberrimi Pictoris Raphaelis de Vrbino, quae in superiori semiarcuata ac seiuncta Tabula praefert imaginem Dei Patris cum duobus Angelis, et Serafinis hinc inde adstantibus, et tabulam inferiorem latitudinis palmorum octo, et longitudinis pariter octo palmorum, et in qua habentur imagines Deiparae Virginis sedentis in solio, suumque Vnigenitum filium gestantis in sinu, ac aspicientem Praecursorem suum Io: Baptistam eidem solio, Virginique innixum nec non a dexteris S. Petri Apostoli, et S. Catherinae Virginis et martyris, a sinistris uero S. Pauli Apostoli pariter et S. Margheritae itidem Virginis et Martyris et quae

The painted panel, a most renowned work of the painter Raphael of Urbino, in which in the upper arch and separate panel there appears an image of God the Father with Angels and Seraphim standing, and the lower panel has the width of eight *palmi*', and the equally a height of eight *palmi*, and in which there are images of the Virgin, Mother of God, sitting on a throne, and her only born son held on her breast , and gazing upon Him is John the Baptist by the throne, and supporting the Virgin to the right is St Peter the Apostle, and St Catherine Virgin and Martyr, and to the left is St Paul the Apostle together with St Margaret likewise Virgin and Martyr, and [the

asseruabatur in ecclesia interiori, et Choro supradicti V. Monasterij

panels] are kept in the inner church, and choir of the above mentioned venerable monastery.

Et eodem venditionis, cessionis, et concessionis titulo, et causa dictae RR. Moniales dederunt et eidem D. Comiti Io: Antionio presenti omnia et singula ac quaecumque earum jura nullo penitus jure sibi reseruato etc.

And by the same deed, [the panels] being sold, ceded, and granted, by the most reverend nuns by the mentioned stipulation and to the same Count Giovanni Antonio, present, all and each of them and with no rights whatsoever reserved.

Hanc autem venditionem fecerunt supradictae Moniales quia sic etc. et ex causis in supra enunciata et infrallegata licentia expressis et pro precio et precij nomine scutorum bis mille monetae, de paulis decem pro scuto; in quorum computum dictus D. Comes Io: Antonius pro summa et quantitate scutorum quatuorcentum trigintaquatuor b. 41 q. 3 monetae dedit – suprascriptis Monialibus – creditum quod in simili summa habet contra Sanctem Pauolozzium de territorio Castilionis Lacus etc. (sequuntur aliae quinque cessiones creditorum, post quas).

Thus the abovementioned nuns made the sale and from the stipulations expressed in the abovementioned licence for the agreed value of two thousand *scudi*, that is 10 *paoli* for each *scudo*. In which calculations, Count Giovan Antonio, for the amount and quantity of 434 *scudi*, 41 *baiocchi*, and 3 *quattrini*, gave the abovementioned nuns credit for a similar sum he had against S. Pauolozzi in the territory of Castiglione del Lago (followed by five other concessions of credit, after which).

Alia scuta ducentum monetae praefatae Moniales fassae fuerunt habuisse, et recepisse a dicto D. Comite Io: Antonio in tot frumento et uino pro eorum usu ante presens instrumentum, de quibus quietauerunt in forma eumdem D. Comitam presentem

Regarding the other 200 *scudi* mentioned, the nuns will receive from the Count Giovanni Antonio all [200 *scudi*] in grain and wine for their own use, in the present legal instrument, in which they had agreed in this way with the present Lord Count.

Alia uero scuta quatuorcentum septuagintatria b. 58. q. 2 pro residuo et integra solutione supradictae Moniales habuerunt et receperunt in contanti, et pecunia numerata a dicto D. Comite Io: Antonio, quem presentem de dicta integra summa scutorum bismille quietauerunt in forma etc. Promisit quoque dictus D. Comes Io: Antonius infra tres menses proximos ab hodie fieri facere et tradere copiam supradictarum pictarum Tabularum ad formam dictae et infralligatae licentiae, alias de proprio etc. etc.

Another [amount] of 470 *scudi*, 58 *baiocchi*, and 2 *quattrini* for the remaining, and the nuns will receive the entire payment mentioned above in cash, and the money counted by Count Giovanni Antonio, with whom they agreed in this way the entire amount of two thousand *scudi*. Count Giovanni also agreed, within the next three months from today, to have made and delivered a copy of the above mentioned painted panel according to the terms of mentioned licence, apart from his own..

9. Receipt for the copy of the main panel, 18 June 1678
Perugia, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Notarile, 4094, fols 389v-391v, Rogiti di M. A. Fontaiuti, prot. del 1678

Eisdem millesimo indictione et pontificatu quibus supra Die uero decima octaua mensis Iunij. Actum Perusiae in V. Monasterio S. Antonij de Padua ante portam eiusdem presentibus etc.

In the same year (1678), (first) indiction, and in the pontificate (of Innocent XI) where on the 18th day of the month of June. The act done in Perugia in the venerable monastery of St Anthony of Padua before the gate of the same, being present etc.

Cum sicut ab infrascriptis partibus asseritur, sit quod alias et sub die 8.a mensis januarij currentis anni 1678 RR. Sorores V. Monasterij S. Antonij Patauini huius Ciuitatis – vendiderint et concesserint III.mo D. Comiti Io: Antonio Bigazzino nobili Perusino depictam Tabulam, opus celeberrimi Pictoris Raphaelis de Vrbino – precio scutorum duorum millium, et cum promissione per supradictum D. Comitem Io: Antonium facta dd. Sororibus fieri faciendi ac tradendi infra trimestre tunc proximum copias supradictarum Tabularum eidem uenditarum et consignatarum; et cum fuerint copiae praedictae factae et perfectae, et cupiens idem C. Comes Io: Antonius – dictam ut supra factam promissionem adimplere tradendo et consignando dictas copias, et quietationem reportare – hinc est quod conuocato, congregato, et cohadunato de ordine infrascriptae R. M. Abbatissae generali capitulo – ubi interfuerunt infrascriptae Sorores videlicet

When, as asserted by the below-written parts, previously on the 8th day of the month of January of the current year 1678, the Reverend Sisters of the venerable monastery of St Anthony of Padua of this city have sold and relinquished to the most illustrious Count Giovan Antonio Bigazzini, noble of Perugia, the painted panel, the work of the most renowned painter Raphael of Urbino for the price of two thousand *scudi*, and with the promise made by the previously mentioned Count Giovan Antonio to have made and brought then in the next three months copies of the same painted panel that was sold and attested. And when the previously mentioned copies should be made and completed, and Count Giovan Antonio desiring the same, to carry out the agreed promise made by delivering and attesting said copies – for this reason [the nuns] being convened, assembled and joined together by the order of the below-written Reverend Mother Abbess of the general chapter – where evidently the below-written sisters were present

Ad.um R. M. Sor Maria Victoria Abbatissa

R. M. Sor Judicta Vicaria (sequuntur nomina aliarum Monalium n. 27) fecerunt finem et quietationem prefato D. D. Comiti Io: Antonio -, ipsumque D. Comitem eiusque etc. liberauerunt et penitus absoluerunt, et liberant ac absoluunt a dicta ut supra facta promissione tradendi copias dd. picturarum etc. etc.'

Addendum: the Reverend Mother Sister Maria Victoria, Abbess

The Reverend Mother Sister Judith Deputy (followed by the names of twenty-seven other nuns) have made the previously mentioned terms and agreement with Count Giovan Antonio – and the same Count [has agreed]. They acquitted and thoroughly absolved [him], and they acquit and absolve after the said promise made to bring copies of the paintings etc etc'

Appendix 3. Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici's efforts to buy Fra Bartolommeo's St Mark from S. Marco at Florence

The following documents were published in Italian in Hans Geisenheimer, "Intorno al passaggio di alcuni quadri di Fra' Bartolomeo dal convento di San Marco a Gallerie Principesche," *Arte e storia* 30 (1911): 42-48.

1. Cardinal de' Medici to Alessandro Sozzini, 17 May 1689

La scorsa settimana scrissi al Pre. Generale dei Domenicani in proposito di un quadro di mano del Frate quale presentemente è situato nel Coro di S. Marco di questa Città e che dal Serenissimo Sig. Principe di Toscana vien desiderato con intentione di contraccambiar la valuta del medesimo con un regalo a' Padri d'altro ornamento o suppelletile sacra dalla quale la loro Chiesa riceva maggior utile e comparsa. E benchè la mia lettera fosse concepita con le forme più premurose che io sapessi esprimere, non ne ho riportato in questo ordinario che la negativa nella conformità che ella potrà vedere dalla lettera medesima che qui acclusa le mando.

Last week I wrote to the Padre General of the Dominicans about a picture by the Frate's hand, which is presently located in the choir of S. Marco in this city, and that is desired by the Serene Prince of Tuscany. He would like to exchange it for a gift of an equivalent value to the Church Fathers of another ornament or sacred furnishing for their church that would be of great usefulness and fine appearance. And though my letter was expressed in the most courteous manner that I am capable of, in this post, I have transcribed nothing but the rejection, such that it can be seen with the my letter, which are enclosed here.

Desiderando io pertanto che in qualsivoglia maniera S.A. rimanghi servita, incarico perciò V.S. a volersi adoprare in modo di staccar da S. Santità un Breve mediante il quale si tolga di mezzo l'asserto ostacolo di *non alienandi* il che alla di Lei attenzione non sarà difficile d'ottenere, massimamente quando esporrà che tal pittura non è tavola da Altare, ma semplice quadro che rimanendo collocate in luogo assai alto nel Coro, non serve che di accompagnatura ad altro di simile grandezza e che nella medesima Chiesa sono due alter opera dell'istesso artifice, di maggior considerazione, consistenti in due tavole d'Altare.

Wishing, therefore, to continue serving His Highness in any way possible, I therefore charge yourself to make every effort to procure from His Holiness a brief that would dispose of the stated obstacle of "*non alienandi*." It will not be difficult to gain his attention on this matter, especially when you explain that the painting is not an altarpiece, but simply a painting that remains kept very high in the choir, which has no function but as an accompaniment to another of similar size, and that in the same church there are two other works by the same painter, of greater importance, and which are altarpieces..

Non perda Tempo in fare le necessarie incumbenze, e quando il negozio sara incamminato non lo perda di vista.

Do not delay in making the necessary arrangements, and once the negotiation is underway, see it through.

2. Sozzini to Cardinal 21 May 1689

Se l'affare del quadro … fusse vergine senza l'impegno fatto dal P. Generale de' Domenicani per la negative, si potrebbe sperare di condurlo con un poca d'industria alla maturità, ma stante il prefato impegno e le solite difficoltà del Papa si stentarà assaissimo a leveralo dal luogo dove sta presentemente collocate. Portandosi il negozio a dirittura a Santissima senza dubbio sarebbe un andar incontro ad una negativa aperta. La direzzione che se gli dovrebbe dare secondo li stili di questa Curia sarebbe, trattandosi d'alienare uno stabile regolare, di passare per via della Congregazione de' Vescovi e Regolari la quale non piglia risoluzione in simili materie senza prima attendere il parere et il consenso dell'ecclesiastici superiori interessati, ed ottenuto che si sia questo suole quella interporre il suo voto consultivo per lo Papa dal quale poi ha da dependere l'esecuzione, stante la suddetta practica, io mi sono stretto questa mattina con Monsig. Panciatici con dimostrargli le grandissime premure …

If the matter of the painting ... was new and the decision had not already been made against it by the Father General of the Dominicans, we might have hoped to progress toward our goal with a little effort. But in view of the aforesaid ruling and the usual difficulties in dealing with the Pope, it will be especially difficult to take the painting from its present location. Bringing the negotiation straight to His Holiness no doubt would end in a negative result. The direction that you should pursue, according to the customs of the Curia regarding the removal of ecclesiastical furnishings, is to go through the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The Congregation does not come to a resolution on such matters without first waiting for the consent of their superiors. Once obtained, they are wont to interpose their own advisory ruling for the Pope, who is then responsible for carrying it out. Given the practices described above, I paid a visit to Monsignor Panciatici this morning and showed him the utmost courtesy.

Il Prelato nel leggere la risoluta lettera del P. Generale disse di non potervisi applicare altro rimedio se non d'illuminare S. Paternità R.ma acciò che voglia tirarsi fuori dell'impegno corso, lasciando che si possa operare liberamente senza dependere da lui; egli s'è offerto di volergli parlare fortemente et in buona forma con fargli conoscere le proprie convenienze

The Prelate, in reading the letter of the Padre Generale, said that it was impossible to apply other remedies without alerting His Most Reverend Father that you would like to circumvent the current ruling. Allowing that you could still pursue the matter freely without depending on him, he offered to talk forcefully and tactually to him in order to make him aware of what he stands to benefit from the matter

Sarebbe intanto bene di sapere la stima precisa che si faccia del valore di detto quadro, e quanto fusse per importare il compenso che da S.A.S. si pensarebbe dare alla Chiesa… e creda che coll'aiuto di Monsig. Panciatici s'operarà con tutta l'attenzione e con ogni possibile vigore…

Meanwhile, it would be good to know the estimate of the value of this painting, and what should suffice for the compensation that His Highness thinks should be given to the church … and I believe that with the help of Monsignor. Panciatici the matter will proceed with his full attention and with every possible force.

3. Cardinal to Monsignor Panciatici, Secretary of Bishops and Regulars, 24 May 1689

Non lasciando intanto di dirle che il quadro essendo d'una sola figure raprresentante S. Marco… senza verun'altra cosa, non è di quella stima che forse è stata concepita, assicurandola che Quattro in cinquecento scudi posson essere il suo giusto valore; e mi è noto che un altro Generale senza verun negoziato e utile dello stesso Convento di S. Marco levò un S. Sebastiano, compagno del quadro di cui si tratta, fatto dallo stesso Autore, e lo mandò al re di Francia.

Not failing to mention that the painting of St Mark represents only a single figure… without any other thing; and that, even without the *stima* (which perhaps has been prepared), its worth is estimated at 400 or 500 *scudi*. And I know that another General from the same convent of S. Marco, removed a Sebastian, the companion of the painting in question, made by the same artist, without any negotiation and sent it to the king of France

4. Sozzini to Cardinal de' Medici, 24 May 1689

Colla sua solita efficacia, in occasione della preparatoria Congregazione al S. Offizio, ieri mattina da Monsig. Panciatici fu attaccato questo Padre Generale al quale disse di essersi meravigliato non poco dell'austerità della sua penna intorno al modo tenuto nel rispondere alle lettere dell'A.V.R. Egli se ne scusò con incolparne la rusticità del segretario della religione. Entrato poi il pred.^{o} Prelato a discorrere del merito del'alienzaione del consaputo quadro … l' impegnò a non muoversi contro d'essa et a non fare parte alcuna. Ben è vero che… si protestò che venendo richiesto del parere suo, non haverebbe potuto fare di meno di non disapprovare la vendita di esso. Resta ora che V.A.R. si degni di comandare, se voglia, che si cimenti un sodo memoriale diretto alla Sac. Cong… in nome de' Padri … di S. Marco… supplicando … di potere vendere … il prefato quadro, stimato scudi tanti, per lo prezzo di scudi tanti, poichè oltre il maggior commodo ne risulterebbe l'evidente utilità di detta Chiesa. Il memoriale si rimetterebbe pro informazione all'Arcivescovo di Fiorenza, di poi si riferirebbe per il voto consultivo nella pred.^{a} piena Congreg.^{ne} et annuendo questa se ne parlerebbe da Monsig. Panciatici al Papa, da chi dependerebbe poi l'esecuzione della grazia.

During the preparatory to the Holy Congregation Office, yesterday morning by Monsignor Panciatici was attacked by this Father General to whom he said, with his usual inciveness, that he had been greatly amazed by the austerity of his pen in the manner he took in responding to the letters of Your Most Reverend Highness. The Father General excused himself, blaming the rusticity of the Secretary of religion. Then, Panciatici launched in to a discussion of the merits of removing the painting ... The Father pledged not to take any action against it nor to take any part in the matter. Well it is true that… he declared that if asked of his own opinion, he had no choice but to not disapprove of the sale. It remains now for Your Royal Highness to deign to demand its removal, if you will, by preparing a firm request directed to the Sacred Congregation on behalf of the Fathers of S. Marco requesting the power to sell … the aforesaid painting, which is valued at many *scudi*, for a price of many *scudi*, as well as stating the great benefits and obvious utility to the Church that would result. The request would be remitted to the Archbishop of Florence for review, and then it would be put to an advisory vote in the Congregation, and agreeing to this, Monsignor Panciatici would speak to the pope about it, on whom we must then depend to ratify it.

5. Sozzini to Cardinal de' Medici, 24 May 1689

Da Monsignor Panciatici s'è conceptito l'aggiunto memoriale e lettera informative … Per non mettere in maggior considerazione il negozio ha celato il nome del compratore. Resta ora che di costà si stacchi una proficua informazione acciò che per questo verso si faciliti il nostro negozio.

Monsignor Panciatici has written the attached petition and letter of information ... In order not to draw too much attention to the negotiation, he has concealed the name of the buyer. It remains now that from there, we proceed with an effective notice that will help to facilitate our negotiation.

6. Sozzini to Cardinal de' Medici, 14 June 1689

Si consideri che se il Memoriale fusse concepito nei termi dell'acclusa minuta ed in sostanza da esso poco differente, sarebbe più veridico e di qua si potrebbe adattare un'informazione più favorevole, non essendo le verità che questi religiosi costretti dal bisogno … so muovano ad alienare il predetto quadro.

Consider that if the request was written in the terms of the enclosed draft and was, in substance, little different from it, it would be more truthful. And from there, one could adapt a more favourable notice. It is not the truth that these churchmen, who are compelled by need, must know in order to act to remove the painting.

7. Sozzini to Cardinal de' Medici, 18 June 1689

Ieri sera disse il Prelato che intanto havere espresso nel foglio il bisogno del monastero … per portare motive alla Sacra Congregazione, e molto più al Papa di facilitare la suddetta vendita. Del resto si riferisce al purgatissimo giudizio dell'A.V.R., la quale potrà ordinare che dentro la lettera scritta per informazione sia apposto altro memoriale come più piacerà a V.A.R., facendo nascere sopra di esso un previa informazione di codesto ordinario con procurare che l'espressione quale si metterà nell'accennato interno foglio sia concepita con cause irrepulsive in modo che la detta Sacra Congregazione e molto più questo dubbioso Pontefice si disponghino amendue alla grazia, la quale, come s'è scritto, patisce le sue difficoltà che se non s'aiuta per qualche verso, non si può sperare nei tempi correnti di tirarla fuori così facilmente.

Last night, the prelate said that he expressed in the letter the monastery's requirement to provide a justification for the Sacred Congregation, and, more importantly, for the Pope, in order to facilitate the sale. As for the rest, he referred to the poor judgment of Your Most Reverend Highness, who is going to include, along with the letter of information, the other petition, which appeals more to His Royal Highness, and thus creating prior knowledge of the request. And because the aforementioned sheet is composed in such a repulsive manner, it is doubtful that the Sacred Congregation, and much more so, the Pontiff, will be disposed to favour the petition, which, as has been written, suffers from difficulties. If it is not amended, there is no hope at the present time to remove the painting very easily.

Figures

Figure 1. View of the Carlo Crivelli Room, Sainsbury Wing, London, The National Gallery

Figure 2. View of Chancel Chapel from S Chiara, Medieval & Renaissance Galleries, London, Victoria & Albert Museum

Figure 3. View of installation from *Devotion by Design*, with Luca Signorelli, *Circumcision of Christ*, London, The National Gallery

Figure 4. View of installation from *Roma al tempo di Caravaggio*, with Peter Paul Rubens, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Rome, Palazzo Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Venezia

Figure 5. View of video installation from *Caravaggio e caravaggeschi a Firenze*, with Gerhard Honthorst's *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Cecco del Caravaggio's *Resurrection*, and Spadarino's *Crucifixion*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 6. Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Figure 7. Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, London, The National Gallery

Figure 8. Anonymous, *Elevation of the Eucharist*, Woodcut from Fra Girolamo Savonarola, *Tractato del sacramento e misterii della missa* (Florence, 1493)

Figure 9. Master of St Giles, *Mass of St Giles*, London, The National Gallery

Figure 10. Meliore di Jacopo, *Redeemer with Sts Peter, Mary, John the Evangelist, and Paul*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 11. Simone Martini, *St Catherine of Alexandria Altarpiece*, Pisa, Museo Nazionale di San Matteo

Figure 12. Coppo di Marcovaldo, *Madonna del Bordone*, Siena, S. Maria dei Servi

Figure 13. Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Maestà*, Siena, Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana del Duomo

Figure 14. Francesco Pesellino and Fra Filippo Lippi, *S. Trinità Altarpiece*, London, The National Gallery

Figure 15. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Coronation of the Virgin*, Narni, Museo Eroli

Figure 16. Raphael and Giulio Romano, *Monteluce Coronation*, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana

Figure 17. Neri di Bicci, *Enthroned with Sts Ambrose, Catherine, Margaret and Francis*, Auctioned at Sotheby's, London, 2004

Figure 18. Fra Angelico, *Annalena Altarpiece*, Florence, Museo di San Marco

Figure 19. Fra Angelico, *S. Marco Altarpiece*, Florence, Museo di San Marco

Figure 20. Andrea Mantegna, *S. Zeno Altarpiece*, Verona, S. Zeno

Figure 21. Andrea Mantegna, *St Luke Altarpiece*, Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera

Figure 22. Fra Filippo Lippi, *Maringhi Coronation*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 23. Fra Filippo Lippi, *Marsuppini Coronation*, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana

Figure 24. Francesco Napoletano?, *Angel in Green with a Vielle* / Ambrogio de Predis, *Angel in Red with a Lute*, London, The National Gallery

Figure 25. Leonardo da Vinci, *Adoration of the Magi*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 26. Pietro Perugino, *Deposition*, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia

Figure 27. Pietro Perugino, *Assumption of the Virgin*, Florence, SS. Annunziata

Figure 28. Pietro Perugino, *Vallombrosa Altarpiece*, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia

Figure 29. Andrea del Brescianino, after Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin and Child with St Anne*, destroyed c. 1945 (formerly Berlin, Gemäldegalerie)

Figure 30. Masaccio, *St Anne Metterza*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 31. Martino Rota, engraving after Titian, *St Peter Martyr*, destroyed 1867 (formerly Venice, SS. Giovanni e Paolo)

Figure 32. Giovanni Bellini, *St Vincent Ferrer Altarpiece*, Venice, SS. Giovanni e Paolo

Figure 33. Titian, *Assumption of the Virgin*, Venice, S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari

Figure 34. Michelangelo, *Entombment*, London, The National Gallery

Figure 35. Raphael, *Madonna del Baldacchino*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 36. Fra Bartolommeo, *Pala della Signoria*, Florence, Museo di San Marco

Figure 37. Albrecht Dürer, *Feast of the Rose Garlands*, Prague, Národní Galerie

Figure 38. Self-portrait detail from the *Feast of the Rose Garlands*

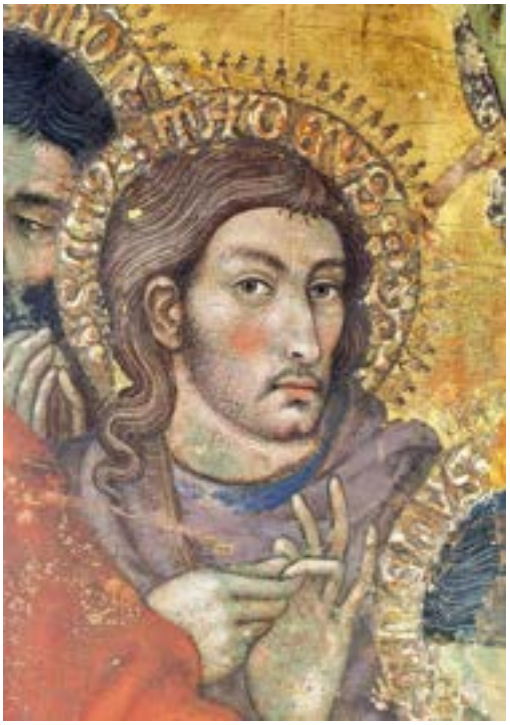

Figure 39. Self-portrait details from Taddeo di Bartolo, *Assumption of the Virgin*, Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum

Figure 40. Albrecht Dürer, *Christ among the Doctors*, Madrid, Museo-Thyssen-Bornemisza

Figure 41. Raphael, *Transfiguration*, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana

Figure 42. Sebastiano del Piombo, *Raising of Lazarus*, London, The National Gallery

Figure 43. Raphael, *St Michael Slaying the Devil*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Figure 44. Raphael, *Holy Family of St Francis*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Figure 45. Giulio Romano, *St Margaret*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Figure 46. Titian, *St George*, Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini

Figure 47. Sebastiano de Piombo, *Visitation*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Figure 48. Ezechia da Vezzano, after Fra Bartolommeo, *St Sebastian*, Fiesole, S. Francesco

Figure 49. Andrea Mantegna, *St Sebastian*, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 50. Andrea Mantegna, *St Sebastian*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Figure 51. Fra Bartolommeo, *St Mark*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 52. Circle of Bacchiacca, *St Sebastian with Sts Vincent and Macario*, Florence, Borgo S. Lorenzo

Figure 53. Giuliano Bugiardini, *St Sebastian*, New Orleans, New Orleans Museum of Art

Figure 54. Pietro Perugino, *St Sebastian*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

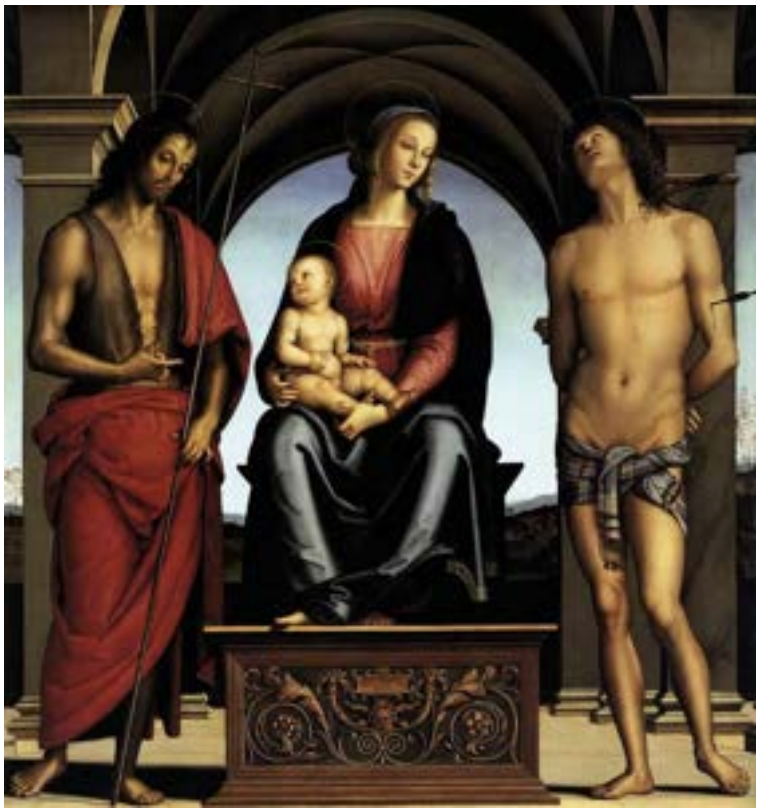

Figure 55. Pietro Perugino, *Madonna Enthroned with Sts John the Baptist and Sebastian*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 56. Titian, *Resurrection* Altarpiece, Brescia, SS. Nazaro e Celso

Figure 57. Titian, *St Sebastian*, detail from the *Resurrection* Altarpiece

Figure 58. Titian, *St Mark* Altarpiece, Venice, S. Maria della Salute

Figure 59. Titian, *St Nicholas* Altarpiece, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana

Figure 60. Roman copy, *Laocoön and His Sons*, Vatican City, Musei Vaticani

Figure 61. Michelangeo, *Rebellious Slave*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Figure 62. Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, Vatican City, Sistine Chapel

Figure 63. Agnolo Bronzino, *Christ in Limbo*, Florence, S. Croce

Figure 64. Agnolo Bronzino, *Resurrection*, Florence, SS. Annunziata

Figure 65. Andrea del Sarto, *Holy Family*, Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica

Figure 66. Raphael, *Madonna dell' Impannata*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 67. Sandro Botticelli, *Adoration of the Magi*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 68. Andrea del Sarto, *Annunciation*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 69. Domenico Fiasella, after Andrea del Sarto, *Madonna with Eight Saints* (destroyed c. 1945), Sarzana, S. Caterina

Figure 70. Raphael, *Marriage of the Virgin*, Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera

Figure 71. Antonio Allegri da Correggio, *Adoration of the Shepherds* ("*La notte*"), Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

Figure 72. Raphael, *Portrait of Julius II*, London, The National Gallery

Figure 73. Raphael, *Madonna of Loreto*, Chantilly, Musée Condé

Figure 74. Raphael, *Entombment*, Rome, Galleria Borghese

Figure 75. Andrea Mantegna, *Entombment*, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Figure 76. Raphael, *Lamentation*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins

Figure 77. Pietro Perugino, *Lamentation*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 78. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Madonna and Child with St Anne* ("Madonna of the Serpent"), Rome, Galleria Borghese

Figure 79. Cecco del Caravaggio, *Resurrection*, Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago

Figure 80. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Inspiration of St Matthew*, destroyed c. 1945 (formerly Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich Museum)

Figure 81. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Death of the Virgin*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Figure 82. Peter Paul Rubens, *St Gregory the Great with Saints*, Grenoble, Musée de Beaux-Arts

Figure 83. Peter Paul Rubens, High Altar of the *Madonna della Vallicella*, Rome, Chiesa Nuova

Figure 84. Fra Bartolommeo, *Salvator Mundi*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 85. Fra Bartolommeo, *Isaiah* and *Job*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 86. Fra Bartolommeo, *Pietà*, Florence, Galleria Palatina, after restoration

Figure 87. Fra Bartolommeo, *Pietà*, Florence, Galleria Palatina, before restoration

Figure 88. Jacopo Empoli, Copy after Andrea del Sarto, *S. Ambrogio Altarpiece*, Stoke Poges, St Giles Church

Figure 89. Andrea del Sarto, *Annunciation with St Michael*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 90. Filippino Lippi, *Adoration of the Magi*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 91. Andrea del Sarto, *Archangel Raphael with Tobias, San Leonardo, and a Donor*, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 92. Andrea del Sarto, *Gambassi Altarpiece*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 93. Andrea del Sarto, *Disputà*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 94. Andrea del Sarto, A*nnunciation*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 95. Pietro Perugino, *Pietà*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 96. Ludovico Cardi (Il Cigoli), *Vocation of St Peter*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 97. Andrea del Sarto, *Passerini Assumption*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 98. Agostino Carracci, engraving after Francesco Francia, *St Sebastian*, (formerly in S. Giuseppe fuori Porta Saragozza, Bologna), London, The British Museum

Figure 99. Fra Carnevale, *Birth of the Virgin*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Figure 100. Fra Carnevale, *Presentation of the Virgin*, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts

Figure 101 Raphael, *Madonna del Pesce*, Madrid, Museo del Prado

Figure 102. Raphael, *Visitation*, Madrid, Museo del Prado

Figure 103. Raphael, *Lo Spasimo di Sicilia*, Madrid, Museo del Prado

Figure 104. Correggio, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 105. Jean Boulanger, after Correggio, *Madonna di Albinea*, Albinea, S. Prospero

Figure 106. Correggio, *Madonna Enthroned with St George*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie

Figure 107. Correggio, *Madonna with St Sebastian*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie

Figure 108. Dosso Dossi, *Madonna Enthroned with St Sebastian and St George*, Modena, Galleria Estense

Figure 109. Dosso Dossi, *Madonna with St George and St Michael*, Modena, Galleria Estense

Figure 110. Dosso Dossi, *Four Fathers*, destroyed c. 1945 (formerly Dresden, Gemäldegalerie)

Figure 111. Cima da Conegliano, *Deposition*, Modena, Galleria Estense

Figure 112. Tintoretto, *Madonna in Glory with Saints*, Modena, Galleria Estense

Figure 113. Annibale Carracci, *St Roch Distributing Alms*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie

Figure 114. Giuseppe Camerata, after Camillo Procaccini, *St Roch Giving the Sacrament to the Plague-Stricken* (destroyed c. 1945)

Figure 115. Annibale Carracci, *Assumption of the Virgin*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie

Figure 116. Annibale Carracci, *Madonna of St Matthew*, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie

Figure 117. Raphael, *Madonna of Foligno*, Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana

Figure 118. Parmigianino, *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine*, Bardi, S. Maria Addolorata

Figure 119. Pietro Perugino, *Vision of St Bernard*, Munich, Alte Pinakothek

Figure 120. Jacopo Tintoretto, *Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples*, Madrid, Museo del Prado

Figure 121. Raphael, *Madonna Enthroned with Saints* (The Colonna Altarpiece), Main panel, lunette Predella (left to right): St Francis of Assisi, London Dulwich Picture Gallery; *Agony in the Garden* New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; *Pietà*, Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; *Road to Calvary*, London, The National Gallery: *St Anthony of Padua*, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery

Figure 122. Carlo Dolci, *Vision of St Louis of Toulouse*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 123. Fra Bartolommeo, *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 124. Ludovico Cardi (Il Cigoli), *Deposition*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 125. Rosso Fiorentino, *Dei Altarpiece*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 126. Francesco Bassano, *Martyrdom of St Catherine*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 127. Annunziata Verchiani, after Guercino, *Martyrdom of St Bartholomew* (damaged), Viterbo, Chiesa della Visitazione

Figure 128. Orazio Riminaldi, *Martyrdom of St Cecilia*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 129. Orazio Riminaldi, *Moses Raising the Brazen Serpent*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 130. Annibale Carracci, *Christ in Glory with Saints*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 131. Carlo Maratta, *Madonna Appearing before S. Filippo Neri*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 132. Francesco Mazzola (Parmigianino), *Madonna of the Long Neck*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

Figure 133. Giovanni Lanfranco, *Ecstasy of St Margaret*, Florence, Galleria Palatina

Figure 134. Andrea del Sarto, *Madonna of the Harpies*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

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